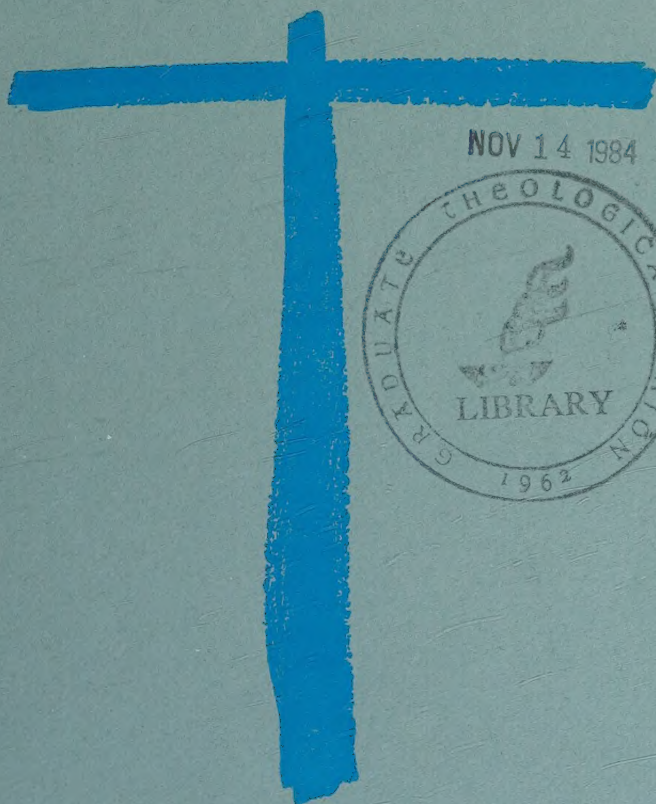
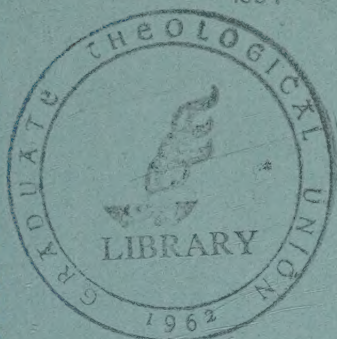


*The Gospel Now*

# **The Franciscan**



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**SEPTEMBER, 1981**

# The Society of Saint Francis

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**Minister General :** Brother Geoffrey S.S.F.

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*Pax et bonum.*

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## FUTURE NUMBERS

It is hoped that the following themes will be represented:

January 1982	Mission
May	S. Francis and the Arts
September	Francis 800

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THE GOSPEL NOW

The Archbishop of Canterbury (*centre*) with Brother Geoffrey at the Conference. *On left*, Revd. Kale King of the American Third Order.







## The Gospel Now



IT was Brother Geoffrey's idea, we said. He protested that he was just the one to whom the idea was given. At any rate he persuaded us to initiate discussions, and discussions there were, in Brothers' and Sisters' houses and in Third Order Groups all over the world. Material was shared and discussed again. Then, this year, 29 May till 4 June, came the conference itself, at Hilfield Friary, with all the provinces represented. What had brought this diverse group together? Christian commitment, yes, but Christian commitment in a Franciscan setting.

That commitment might seem a very slight thing to have in common against such a variety of backgrounds and connexions with and in the Society. But as we talked together some kind of unity did emerge, and the same unity was apparent when all the groups met together. Conferences are primarily an experience, in particular an experience of shared commitment and an underlying unity. All who attended this conference would wish to share it with all our brothers, sisters and friends. In this special number *THE FRANCISCAN* reproduces most of the addresses and the gists of the discussions.

One point to which Geoffrey referred in his first address was the beginning of a fund for giving specific help to certain people in Third World countries and readers may like to have their attention particularly drawn to this (see pages 123/4). Donations may be sent to Mr. F. Chappell, 8 Oak Tree Gardens, Bromley, Kent BR1 5BH.

The Archbishop of Canterbury in his challenging address to the conference referred to five tests as to whether what was being signalled was in fact the Gospel. They came from a book *Good News* by John Fenton and Michael Hare Duke (a Tertiary), published by S.C.M. Press, 1976. Briefly, the tests are: Does it sound new and fresh? Does it disturb? Does it take one's breath away? Does it bring joy? Does it promote love?

The symbol at the head of this page and of the other items in this issue represents the conference candle, which burned in the chapel at Hilfield while the conference took place, its base surrounded by tokens of each country from which people had come. The small circles of light which surround it will be by means of this number spread out to all those countries and it is hoped into the world beyond.

# Chronicle

*Mother Elizabeth writes:*

**COMMUNITY OF S. FRANCIS** I should like to take this opportunity to mention the new venture of C.S.F. in Paddington. A small, terraced house in S. Michael's Street is being made available for us, where I expect to go, together with three other sisters. Some structural alterations and decorating are required on the building, which is held in trust by the parish of S. John, Hyde Park. S. Michael's parish was amalgamated with S. John's: its own church was destroyed in the war.

We hope we may be able to move in before the end of the year, possibly by the end of November. The sisters will expect to work part-time in the area in whatever capacity is available and we are presently engaged in discovering needs and possibilities with the aid of a support group, drawn together by the Vicar, The Revd. Thaddaeus Birchard, and a local lady Councillor. The house is about five minutes walk from Paddington Station and ten minutes from the brothers in Orsett Terrace. Next exciting instalment in the January issue!

*Brother Jonathan writes:*

**ALNMOUTH** There are a number of weekends in the next few months which may interest readers of THE FRANCISCAN. All of them have a number of vacancies and early application to Brother Jonathan is advised:

**1. Roads to Freedom. 2—4 October.**

Led by The Reverend David Wood, Vicar of S. Nicholas, Cramlington.  
A weekend exploring how people become free.

**2. Northern Rally and Festival. 10 October.**

12.30 p.m. Solemn Eucharist.

*Celebrant:* The Bishop of Newcastle, The Right Reverend Alec Graham.

*Preacher:* The Bishop of Durham, The Right Reverend John Habgood.

2.30 p.m. Meeting

*Speakers:* The Minister Provincial, Brother Anselm S.S.F.  
Brother Juniper S.S.F.

**3. Weekend for Sixth Formers. 6—8 November.**

Led by Brother David Stephen S.S.F.

An opportunity to explore such questions as:

Is there more to life than getting on, being successful, and trying to get to the top?  
What changes would be needed for people to live and work together for the good of all?

Is Living Love the way?

**4. Retreat for Clergy. 16—20 November.**

A Retreat, without addresses, at the Friary, with opportunities for direction and counsel.



**5. Weekend on Faith and Work. 4—6 December.**

Led by Brother David Stephen S.S.F.

An opportunity to explore some of the challenges, problems, and possibilities in trying to live the Christian Faith at work. This weekend is designed for those who have started work recently, and for those who hope to start in the near future; minimum age 18 years.

**6. Charismatic Renewal. 11—13 December.**

Led by Father Sean Conaty, Parish Priest of S. Peter and S. Paul, Newcastle. Danger, or blessing, charismatic renewal is a fact of church life today. An opportunity to learn about the charismatic renewal movement.

*Sister Hannah writes:*

**TOYNBEE HALL** I write this from a cottage in the Kent countryside surrounded by wet paint and sleeping-bags. Peter William and I are spending the weekend with a group of Toynbee residents on a decorating project in a house given to the Stepney churches. It is perhaps itself indicative of our increasing relations with the Toynbee community, many of whom now come regularly to Flat B for a cup of coffee, a chat, or to join us for the Eucharist or Compline.

We now rejoice in having a new chapel, blessed for us last month by the Bishop of Stepney; a memorable evening when we were joined by a number of friends. The chapel has been dedicated to Saint Jude, the name of Canon Barnett's church formerly on the site of Toynbee and the patron saint of those 'in dire straits'! The chapel has given us a much needed sense of space and of quiet.

By the time this goes into print our little group of three will have become four, as we welcome Brother Tshiamala who will spend a year with us whilst studying in London. We look forward very much to his arrival.

Leonore continues her work with Community Health and the Bengali population. Peter William continues to work in the Special Families' Centre and I have recently joined the staff at S. Botolph's, Aldgate, where I work in the crypt with the homeless and with alcoholics.

Life is hectic but we receive much support and encouragement. We do ask again for your prayers—perhaps to join with S. Jude in praying for those in 'dire straits'!

*Brother Robert Hugh writes:*

**AMERICAN PROVINCE** I write this just at the end of three weeks of non-stop meetings: The American Provincial Chapter; then at once a flight to England for the First Order Brothers' Chapter; and finally the 'Gospel Now' Conference. With so much input it is difficult to see the wood for the trees and to keep a sense of perspective, but how exciting to have shared at first hand such a vivid experience of our diversity as a worldwide Society in Three Orders, and yet along with it an unmistakable 'family resemblance' that somehow is the hallmark of Franciscans everywhere.

Our recent Provincial Chapter elected four novices to First Profession, and by the time you read this Brothers Aaron, David Burgdorf, John Rohim and Gordon

Peter should have made their Profession Vows. Please pray for their growth and perseverance. We also elected our local leadership for the next three years, and set in motion the process for the election of a Minister Provincial which should be completed by September. Brother Justus is to be Guardian of Little Portion Friary; Brother Norman (Paul) Strong to be Guardian of San Damiano Friary in San Francisco; Brother Desmond to be Guardian of S. Anthony's Friary in Trinidad; and Brother Jason Robert to be in charge of The Bishop's Ranch at Healdsburg. All will be most grateful for your prayers in these responsibilities.

The experiment of the move down the hill to 'New' Little Portion is seen as having been a great success. It will continue for the next three years as a regular Friary. It is also good to know that our old buildings are not standing empty but are being used by other church groups for the care of teenagers and of handicapped children. Two other moves will also take place soon: our brothers working in New York City will be moving into a new space suited to their ministries and resources. We are most grateful to the Rector and Church of S. John's-in-the-Village for the use of their Perry Street apartment during the past year, and we are glad that our links will continue through Brother Willam Bennett as he serves the parish as part of his Seminary training. Our brothers at S. Anthony's Friary in Trinidad have had the temporary use of All Saints' Rectory in Port of Spain, but from September the Friary will be moving to Princetown in the industrial South of Trinidad, to the Rectory of S. Stephen's parish which the brothers have been serving for the past year, and where Brother Desmond will now be Rector for the next two years. At the same time Brother Dunstan will start an academic year at Codrington College in Barbados, a time of study and refreshment during which he will also be available for counselling.

After his time in Australia as Acting Novice Guardian it is good to have Brother Mark Charles back with us. In a month or two we look forward to three more transfers: Brother Derek is returning for three years to be our Novice Guardian; Brother Antonio is coming, initially for two years, and hopes to explore the possibilities of a Japanese ministry from our San Francisco Friary; and Brother John Charles is to be with us, with a primary focus on writing several books over this next year.

*Sister Cecilia writes:*

**SAN FRANCISCO** In the city of S. Francis the Roman Catholics are making plans for the eight hundredth birthday celebrations which include a vigil for peace, 2—3 October, in which we, the First and Third Orders are sharing. The 'Year of S. Francis' is to be officially announced by our Mayor, Diane Feinstein, and the exchanging of flags between Assisi and San Francisco.

It is hoped that the Pope may visit the city, possibly in 1982.

The Italian Cultural Institute is arranging lectures, concerts and art exhibitions and a choir from Assisi will make an American tour.

It all sounds very grand and, like his Basilica, is enough to make the 'little, poor man' turn in his grave but no doubt we shall enjoy the celebrations and try to keep in mind what S. Francis and Franciscanism are really all about.



## Return to the Gospel

*The Opening Address of the Conference by  
Brother Geoffrey, the Minister General*



I HAVE been studying the material for use in the groups at this Conference, and I congratulate the Central Steering Committee on their admirable effort in compiling it from the reports sent in from the different parts of the Society. I know they are the result of quite

a lot of anguish of spirit and wrestling with what Gospel commitment involves. Equally, if we really worked through all this from start to finish it would take us at least a month, if not longer. Let us, then, use the material to stimulate, but not restrict us, and not feel we must plough through it point by point. You may not even want to start at the beginning, but may want to get down to a question later on. I would like this conference to go deep on a few matters rather than skim superficially over a whole range of subjects.

Let me now make a few points and share with you some of my own concerns which you may like—or may not like—to take up later on. In all our discussions let us return to the Gospel, the words of Jesus, for our guidance. It would be a good plan to bring our Bibles to the sessions so that we can refer to them. Let us be clear that he really meant what he said, and not try to water it down to something more readily acceptable. The great sell out is to say, ‘Well, of course, he didn’t really mean it’. Let us start by affirming he really meant what he said. Let us be concerned to express our love for the Lord in terms of obedience as the Lord demanded of his disciples. It is interesting to note that in S. John’s Gospel it is often stated that the Father loves the Son, but the Son’s response to the Father is obedience. Jesus only once says, in S. John xiv: 31, that the Son loves the Father, and that is immediately followed by a pledge of obedience. The Father loves the Son, and the Son obeys the Father. We, too, must see our love for the Lord in terms of obedience, and this includes obedience to our rule and Principles, and obedience to our Vows. Otherwise we may find our Lord saying to us in our Society what he said to Peter, ‘You stand right in my path when you look at things from man’s point of view, and not from God’s’. (S. Matthew xvi: 23, J. B. Phillips’ translation). Let our Conference then begin with a commitment to obedience as our response to the God who so loved us that he gave his only Son, that everyone that has faith in him may not die but have eternal life. Let

us take our Lord's words for ourselves, ' It is meat and drink for me to do the will of him that sent me until I have finished his work '. And let us not shrink from the cost that this will mean for us.

### *Dear Me!*

Peter Ustinov entitled his amusing and penetrating autobiography *Dear Me!* I would like us also to look at *Dear Me*. We start with ourselves. In our efforts to be more truly ourselves and accept ourselves, which is entirely right, have we in the end simply become more selfish and self-centred, rather than realising the Gospel truth that it is in giving away ourselves that we find our true selves? Are we concentrating at present too much on self-fulfilment and on expressing ourselves in the way we want? Surely fulfilment is a by-product of doing God's will perfectly, and not an end in itself? I see in the Gospel an emphasis on abandonment, on renunciation of ourselves and of our own will in order to find our true self. ' Whoever cares for his own safety is lost ', says Jesus, ' but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, that man is safe. What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self? '. While I am sure it is right for us to be trained and get ourselves best qualified for the work God is calling us to, let us not use these training courses as an escape from ministry, and let us make sure that the course we are doing is going to be of real use in our future ministry, and not merely to gratify our own needs. We are his men and women, sent by him and to be useful to him, and may not spend our lives sheltering from the real work he wants us to do. If we are concerned to preserve and protect ourselves it will be the death of us both as individuals and as a Society.

Our first duty is to be a listener. Love for God begins with listening to his Word and obeying it. This is the heart of prayer. And the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. Many today are looking for an ear that will listen, but they do not find it very often among the Christians because the Christians are talking where they should be listening. He who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either. His prayer will simply be a prattling in the presence of God, and so his spiritual life will die. It is Bonhoeffer who says, ' The ministry of listening has been committed to us by him who is himself the great listener, and whose work we share. We would listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God '. Let us really listen to each other at this Conference.



Let us hear what our brothers and sisters from different continents and islands are trying to say, however difficult they find expression of it. Let us also this week leave plenty of time for silence so we may hear God's voice speaking to us. The quiet evening tonight is very important so we may quieten ourselves and become receptive as the Conference gets under way.

### *Alcoholism and Homosexuality:*

Many of us are living in cultures where alcoholic drinking and homosexuality are assumed as part of the way of life. In S.S.F. we have experienced the destructive nature of alcoholism and we have seen vocations destroyed as a result. Alcoholism has brought us considerable sadness and pain, and has involved us in enormous expense. This is a real issue for us, and in striving for a life more obedient to the Gospel we must face it and this Conference. While we are products of our culture, are we in danger of too readily identifying our culture with the Gospel? What should be our stand?

Similarly with homosexuality. The church itself is confused about this as we are. In an all-male or all-female community it is inevitable that homosexuals should be drawn to us. Also it is natural that some should wish to identify with the gay liberation movement as in the past homosexuality has not been understood and has been treated harshly by both the law and the church. There is a need for education, sympathetic understanding and acceptance. But those of us who are in a religious community and have taken a vow of chastity need to be clear what this means for us, whether we are homosexual or heterosexual. For both it means a giving up in order to express our sexuality in a different way. Homosexuality, like alcoholism, can have a totally destructive effect on community life unless discipline is maintained and the vows kept. Again, since this is a real issue in our community, in facing the Gospel we need to know how we should cope with this fact of our life.

### *Witness:*

A report from one of the groups reads as follows: 'Our meetings have left us with a general feeling of our inability to extend the understanding and compassion which we feel for one another to the wider world . . . We have agreed that what is essential is direct personal communication in the places in which we find ourselves, and to become

aware of Christ in others'. I believe that at least a part of our frustration is due to the fact that we are nervous and shy of witnessing openly to our Christian commitment, and to stand clearly on the side of the Gospel. Whenever we can do this we find liberation—and the cost.

On this subject of witness I would like to draw your attention to a book entitled *The Trial of Beyers Naude*, edited by the International Commission of Jurists at Geneva. The sub-title of this account of his trial is 'Christian Witness and the Rule of Law'. Michael Ramsey in his preface to the book describes Beyers Naude as 'a gentleman, one to whom violence or demagoguery are quite alien'. Yet this gentle Afrikaaner, Director of the Christian Institute in South Africa, confesses his faith and lives up to the implications of that faith in a court of law. May I quote *The Trial of Beyers Naude*, edited by the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva. Published by Search Press, London. Pages 82 and 83.

Q. Is it an interference by the Church in matters which do not concern it?

A. No, because the task of the Church is threefold. In the first place the task of the Church is a prophetic one, to preach the word of God and where necessary to warn of the judgment of God. Secondly the task of the Church is a priestly one: i.e. to bring before God the guilt and weakness of man and to pray and ask him for his forgiveness. Thirdly the task of the Church is a kingly one, to confess the lordship of Christ over all areas of human life and to seek that the society of which the Church is a part should recognise and apply his Kingship. If I may put it in this way, the prophetic task is where the Church intercedes with the people in the name of God; the priestly task is where the Church in the name of the people intercedes with God.

Q. Is the calling only that of the Church or also that of individual Christians?

A. No, it is the task of each Christian because in obedience to Christ every Christian is also prophet, priest and king and he is called to exercise the same three responsibilities and functions in his life, in his work, and in his witness every day to the best of his ability.



- Q. May a Christian remain silent about the message which he has to bring because of social and economic embarrassment?
- A. No, the claim and command of Jesus Christ is that his highest obedience is to God as was revealed in Christ Jesus. This remains the struggle of the Christian to what extent he sees his way open to implement this obedience.
- Q. May the Christian withdraw because of the social and political implications of what the Scripture lays down for him?
- A. No, if he wants to be obedient to Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

Here, not in a sermon but in a secular court of law, Beyers Naude lays down the Christian responsibility of witness, done courteously but uncompromisingly and he was placed under a 'banning order' as a result.

I think a lot of our frustration comes from our fear to stand apart and make a positive witness in the way we know we ought. Both as a Church and as an individual, as a Community too, we have perhaps been too afraid to offend or to accept the consequences of witness. For this reason we have not come out firmly and openly on many of the vital issues of today. We have tried to tread that fatally middle course, so dear to Anglicans, which really says nothing and is therefore ignored by the world. I hope that in this Conference we are going to give some real guidance and leadership to our brothers and sisters and not hide behind platitudes and nicely balanced statements which are safe, please nobody and are utterly useless. Now let me say a word about a few of today's crucial issues:

### *Pacifism:*

One such issue is the proliferation of nuclear armaments and the conditioning of the people to accept nuclear war. The signs are that we are drifting into another world war. The word 'drift' we must attack. Drifting is not a Christian attitude. Thomas Merton in his book, *Breakthrough to Peace* says, 'History is ours to make; now above all we must recover our freedom, our moral autonomy, our capacity to control the forces that make for life and death in our Society'. It is no

use wringing our hands and moaning about the prospect of nuclear war. We must be up and doing, and proclaim that nuclear war is an appalling evil, can never be justified and must not happen. I am not advocating that we should adopt an old-fashioned individualist pacifism, though Francis was himself a pacifist and so were the early Tertiaries. I believe that unilateral nuclear disarmament advocated in some quarters is sheer madness. And I am not necessarily condemning liberation movements which use force wherever they may be. But I am saying we should be actively taking part, in an intelligent way, in the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons and work positively for peace. We are to be peace-makers and not see peace as maintaining the status quo. Our first duty is to acquire an accurate knowledge of the weapons themselves, of the political situation, of the outlook of friend and foe alike. I feel sure our brother, Hugh Beach, will help to guide us in attaining this knowledge. We need to study on this level and not simply accept what is put out by the media and popular press. Perhaps our group study could bear this in mind.

Thus we need to come into the open in this external and activist way. But Merton also makes it clear that what is needed is a transformation in people's attitudes to life, so that to destroy life becomes impossibly repugnant. This applies not only on the international level between nations but in facing the violence on our streets, the aggressive racialism, the pressure from militant trades unionists and political groups and all other forms of war in our midst. Merton advocated a much deeper reciprocity, a dialogue between opposites, a social justice within societies, so that the deep causes of war—boredom, frustration, despair—can be attacked at the root'. He continues to say, 'The human race today is like an alcoholic who knows that drink will destroy him, yet always has "good reasons" why he must continue drinking. Such is man in his fatal addiction to war. He is not really capable of seeing a constructive alternative to war'.

So in our groups at this Conference as we consider Gospel living in our present world situation my hope is that there will be some constructive approach to the present drift towards war, and what positive steps we can suggest to relieve the boredom, frustration and despair from which so many are suffering and which are the ingredients which lead to war.



*Third World:*

It is said that the poor are poor because we are rich. This may be an over-simplification of the Third World's problems but there is a basic truth in it. The Brandt report calls for a more drastic re-distribution of the world's wealth so that the poor nations may have some chance of achieving their potential in the world. Obviously so massive an undertaking has to be dealt with at a government level, but we need to be bringing pressure on our respective governments to make them move in this matter. I was glad to know that a number of our Society were present at the impressive demonstration recently at the House of Commons.

We do not need to leave this for future action by governments, however. We can start now in our own Society, amongst our own brothers and sisters. Some friaries have been helping poorer friaries in the Pacific Islands and Africa. For some years we have been helping individual Tertiaries in Africa and S.E. Asia to enable them to survive and to educate their children. We have also helped a number of projects not connected with our Society such as the Oxford Mission in Bangladesh, and a Roman Catholic Community in South India doing similar work to Mother Teresa but not so well known. We can extend this sharing ministry if we have more resources. Increasingly I find as I visit Third World countries people who are really up against it, students who have real ability but no possibility of achieving their potential—some who can barely survive, let alone pay their fees for school. I have also found Tertiaries who want to help people in the Third World, but they want to make sure their money goes to the people who really need it and does not get swallowed up in paying the overheads of the assisting organisations or fall into wrong hands in the receiving countries. So often the poor never see the aid that is being sent them.

So my proposal is the setting up of a fund to which any can contribute small or large amounts and which can be used to help people we are in contact with and know to be in need in Third World countries. In this way our aid is personal, we form links which are reciprocal, and those who are helped have the opportunity to share with us in different ways. They become, then, a part of our prayer and aid no longer is simply the writing of a cheque. I propose that this fund should be separate from the Central Fund and that contributions should be invited and suggestions made as to how the money should be used, though I

would ask that there should not be too many strings attached to gifts. I propose also that the names of those who are being helped should be circulated regularly and news given about them. Let us try to make our concern for the Third World real, human and practical. It may be that we cannot respond to the appeals made by a number of Third World countries that we should send them brothers or sisters to work with them, but let us then at least share our wealth with them as an expression of our care and love.

This pinpoints the need for simplicity in our personal lives, in the life of our family and our community. We can only give adequately if we are prepared to deny ourselves. The question is not how much can I keep and still retain a semblance of simplicity, but how much can I give. Simplicity is not something to be argued about—we shall never get it right that way. It is something we do or do not do. It is the war we must ever be fighting with selfishness, greed and covetousness, and we shall never win this war in discussion groups but only by sacrificial action. Let us in our various homes and friaries and convents be more simple in our way of life that the poor may simply live.

### *Land:*

In the first letter that I put out two years ago calling the whole Society to a Conference on Gospel Living in the 1980s I suggested four points we should consider, one of which was our use of the land. I emphasised our need to realise again more deeply that we are a part of creation, and that we must develop a life that is in harmony with nature rather than against it. In order to help us do this I suggested we should use fruitfully and responsibly such land as we have, however small, and whether in the city or in the countryside. A certain amount of ridicule was poured on this suggestion by some who said there was more to Gospel living than growing cabbages—a sentiment from which I would not dissent. I am, however, going to direct you once again to consider land and how we use it as of fundamental importance in any society, and any consideration of the Gospel must include an attitude to land as part of God's creation. Everything on this planet comes from the land. When I was in Trinidad earlier this year at Carnival time there was a powerful calypso which was very popular and which made an impression on me. It was to the effect that God created the land and he gave it to man free. Landlords have come and exploited the land and taken it from the people. The wrong use of land has led to land

exhaustion, famine and starvation, pollution of the soil and exploitation. The Clares at Stroud have given us a living parable in a right care and reverence for the land in their whole approach to the building of their new monastery. They started with the earth on which they stood and from it their monastery was built to the glory of God from the materials around. We are hoping to show during this Conference the film of the building of the monastery which Sister Angela has made. I am glad to note, also, that in several of our First Order houses a new approach has been made to the garden and to producing our own vegetables and other food. Getting life right begins not with speeches or statements, but by right living which shows the way, and so influences others. If we want others to use their land right we must start with our own, however small, and experience our own relationship with nature.

### *Risk:*

The Gospel has an element of risk about it. The Lord calls his disciples to leave all, abandon their security and dare to follow him, leading they know not where. It was the same with S. Francis and people of all ages flocked to follow him. It was not a carefully contrived vocation, starting from our own convenience, comfort and desire, and continuing until we could lead a life of retirement in security. It was not a matter of doing good works provided the sacrifice does not interfere with our personal desires. We will never get Gospel living right, nor Franciscan living either, until we discover the thrill, the abandonment and the joy of risk. The more we go on protecting ourselves the more we are preparing our destruction. In the last twenty years we have taken risks and have spread to different parts of the world. But do we not need more of that Franciscan spirit of risk and adventure which will bring us also real joy and fulfilment? Our Principles guide us here when they say, 'The Community does not indeed expect ever to have at its disposal many funds for the administration of charitable relief, but it will gladly lend its members in the work of such relief and co-operate with others who are doing it'. If we are thinking of increasing the percentage of our financial giving to the Third World, should we not also make every effort to give our brothers and sisters too?

I could touch on many other subjects but I must draw to a close. I have barely mentioned race problems which are such a painful issue in some of the countries from which we come including this country. I



feel we must be sensitive to the changing needs of the times, and where we have houses in areas where there are known to be racial discrimination and hostility we should treat it as a high priority in our ministry, whatever other ministry we may be engaged in.

My brothers and sisters, God is in our midst.

Let us listen to him and listen to each other and not be afraid to speak the truth in love.

## Personal : Social : Global

*Part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Address*



I'D first of all like to say how grateful I am for the invitation, I regard it as an honour to be invited to the first night and to put at risk what is obviously a very significant moment in the history of the Franciscans. I am on my first visit ever to this place, but I have a mixture of nostalgia and gratitude in my relationship with Franciscans stretching back to the days when I was a Liverpool schoolboy. Brother Douglas came and preached to us and it had quite an effect on me, as also a visit shortly afterwards from Father Algy. I got to know him over the years and knew all the stories about how he had a hot water bottle which went 'glug-glug' and so he was a familiar figure. He used to come and take Quiet Days when I was at Westcott House and I have always used him as an example of people who could get away with, not only get away with, really help you at a Quiet Day by saying things which you already knew a hundred times; but somehow the way in which he said them and what he was made all the difference. And he was such an example of how addresses are not meant to be remembered, they really are meant to be received. And then, I've got one moving story which you will forgive me for telling, and that is when I was in the Army, a tank officer in the last war. One day, it was announced that I could have a few days leave—it was somewhere across the Rhine, I think—and I was very pleased about this and was off to Brussels as soon as I could. But before I went I had to hand over my little tank troop to a young officer whom I didn't really know and he came and took over my tank. He was somebody called Christopher Clarke and he took over

my tank. The very next day, the bullet that was obviously meant for me, hit him, and as he lay, to everybody's mind dying, he made one of those resolutions that so many people make but alas not so many keep, that if he recovered he would give his life to God through the Franciscans. He did make a miraculous recovery, and became Brother Simon, and had I think a wonderful ministry, here, at the School, and in Australia. Then he was killed in a climbing accident. But I lived on because I didn't get the bullet that he got, and in the Providence of God I am spared to become Archbishop of Canterbury. And he was spared to become a rather marvellous Franciscan. And that has been a story which at the time helped me a lot. And then—I mustn't reminisce, but . . . —the latest occasion was in a hectic tour of the U.S.A. from which I've just returned, one of the most refreshing moments was when the Franciscans met me in San Francisco, and they realised that I only wanted to collapse for half-an-hour and they gave the most wonderful facilities for complete collapse!

Now this is the age of the Conference, and the Consultation. Very naturally in a time of rapid change and expanding moral and social horizons people wish to come together to pool their experiences and to check their strategies one against another. And, of course, this Consultation brings together the representatives of one of the most vigorous and hopeful movements not only in our Church, but in the whole of the contemporary Catholic Church.

One of the most searing things about your tradition is the absolute and uncompromising way in which S. Francis himself, once part of the Gospel message became particularly vivid for him, hastened to put it into practice. Someone only recently in Oxford, a theologian, said: You have people like S. Francis and pre-eminently Our Lord, and they produce the impossible wonder of the Gospel, but institutions can't do that. You can't expect the Church to do and achieve what they did; it's the church's job just to keep alive the message so that it doesn't die. There is a sense in which following in the footsteps of Francis and reflecting on this question of 'The Gospel Now' as Franciscans you can hardly fail to be influenced by S. Matthew 10: 7—19. The Gospel call contained in that passage, to share the life of the poor, of those who are excluded from the safety and security of prosperous society and to discover in this way of poverty, a royal road to sharing the very life of Christ himself, understanding his way, and conforming ourselves to his demands.

It seems to me that the way of poverty associated with that moving and disturbing passage in S. Matthew's Gospel is still so powerful that it cannot be handled or considered without a painful awareness of how far we have all fallen short of the wholehearted love of Christ and following in his way, which the Gospel demands. Now I want to consider the way of poverty as a response to the Gospel, and a way of following Our Lord at the three levels of experience . . . poverty, that is my theme. It is the Franciscan theme to me ever since I met Brother Douglas and he brought a tramp with him as a visual aid. I want to consider it in three ways: the personal, the social and the global.

### Personal

The first two were intertwined in Francis' own experience at the beginning of his mission. He was born in the late 12th Century, when the towns of Italy were expanding and the Church was faced by the challenge of how to bring the message of the Gospel to the urban poor. The towns were places of great fear and insecurity for those who had emigrated from the countryside in the hope of a better and more prosperous life. The Plague regularly took its toll and in these conditions, apocalyptic fantasy, some of it definitely heretical, was rife. Plenty of fantasies around then, as now. And a possessing Church firmly allied with the old order found it difficult to evoke sympathy from, or itself understand, the urban poor and those who had been pushed to the margins of society. That's how it is now. Francis took the road of poverty as a way of identifying himself with Jesus Christ which at the same time would bring him close to those who were largely excluded from the established order of things.

From the very beginning therefore the pursuit of poverty had a personal, reflexive element and also a social strategic element and it was impossible to disentangle them. And this has been true throughout Franciscan history in this country; for example, one of the influences behind the revival of your Franciscan Society was the desire to help the unemployed on the tramp. But also the Revival in this country exhibited the ambivalence of Christian talk about poverty. The poor were to be relieved, but part of the relief was in saying that poverty of spirit, which unless it is to be hopelessly sentimentalised, must be associated with a measure of actual poverty, was the condition of really seeing profoundly the nature of Our Lord's kingdom and identifying ourselves



with his work for it. In personal terms the need for this insight in our own social lives is evident. I have to talk largely from the experience of this country. We are born into a world of distraction and congestion, we are choked by so many good things that we are able to savour very few of them. We have much to live with, and little to live for. We are not heart-whole and our energy is turned from us by the pursuit of a mass of conflicting desires. Now fasting from this sort of excess which causes congestion and distraction, embracing a simplicity and austerity of life, is indispensable if we wish to recover our taste buds and our zest for living. The abandoned life which our Lord talks of, which can be enjoyed in his company, is so different from the death-deferral to which so many of our energies are directed, and the passage from congested and distracted living to Our Lord's simplicity and zest can I believe only come with the revival of a joyous asceticism and it is in that the tradition of Franciscan poverty has much to teach us. You must know that, and you could illustrate it in far better ways than I. The shedding of the clutter, whether it be in the way in which you worship and pray, or the shedding of the distractions and the complications in the way you live in order to have a purity and simplicity of vision. But socially also one of the consequences of the tradition of poverty is that Franciscans have always travelled light and been able to enter realms and areas of our society which are barred to the plump and well-meaning.

### Social

In our great cities there is an even more desperate need than ever before, for Christian communities without pretensions, travelling light, to identify themselves with a thin and tasteless form of life which exists there, and through their prayer and friendship with our Lord and God to show in the most vivid way possible that a life of indignation and obscure sense of betrayal which people in inner cities feel, can be turned into a life of thanksgiving and joy. Now in view of this tradition of yours, of the inextricability of the poverty of the spirit which is the ascetic way and the social poverty, I was interested to read through the latest issue of *THE FRANCISCAN* and to find out where Franciscans were currently deployed. And I have to confess that part of my reason for welcoming this visit is that I come looking for reassurance that your heroic efforts in Plaistow, in Belfast and Liverpool, are going to be the shape of things to come and not front line positions which will be abandoned. In this beautiful place you enjoy freedom, beauty and

tranquillity. These are the most expensive assets in the world. You have to be a millionaire to have tranquillity and beauty and space, and they are almost beyond purchase for most people. You are active in the universities and large numbers of suburban parishes and this activity is good, but it would be tragic if you were to direct your chief efforts in this country and world-wide areas where the contemporary church is actually rather well organised and deployed. To be true to S. Francis' understanding of the Gospel we would expect Franciscans to be found with the sick and dilapidated. I know, for example, of the valuable work which the community now established in Compton Durville has done, long in advance of the hospice movement for the terminally ill and the dying.

### Global

We expect to find Franciscans with the lepers of our society, the outsiders and particularly in our world with the homeless in our great urban conurbations, and with the mentally ill because they are the people who cannot keep up in our sort of society, so they fall through the net. Even in S. Francis' day it rapidly became clear that the global implications of this social and personal living out of the Gospel were staggering. S. Francis himself was able to cross the most deadly divide of the 13th century, that between Saracen and Christian, and I am sure we all carry clearly in our mind a picture of his meeting with Saladin. Franciscans rapidly moved into universities because you have a theory of knowledge and a way of learning which has implications as radical as Marxism for understanding the world of knowledge. Indeed it seems to me that your particular association with the poor, and the expansion of your order throughout the world and not least the existence of your Third Order in all sorts of places often of influence and decision, gives you a very good opportunity to build on the important work you have already done in increasing awareness in the Church that we must see ourselves as world citizens with no limits of our concept of brotherhood and no geographical boundary to the responsibility Christ calls upon us to shoulder on behalf of our neighbours.

Someone here today reminded me of a rather academic lecture I gave some time ago on whether Human Rights was a satisfactory ethical concept, to bring world citizens together. And I argued that although that method of speech or philosophical tradition had achieved much, it was in fact flawed in many points on its own. The doctrine of Human

Rights can be misused as it is being misused in some parts of the world and turned into something which is the equivalent of having the freedom to do your own thing, which can be often linked with a quite selfish attitude to, for example, the whole question of world poverty and helping your neighbour. In any case in the 19th century the idea of inalienable rights which a person has simply by virtue of being human, had to be corrected by the Utilitarian movement which considered the greatest good of the greatest number. This consisted in infringing a person's right to do what he would with his own wealth, and taking it away in order to equalise the amount of wealth available—a very shorthand way of describing it—but neither Human Rights nor Utilitarianism, which are philosophical which spring from a Humanist and not a Christian background, are as fundamental as the Christian insight of brotherhood, or sisterhood. In the great fight against the slave trade which was conducted in the 19th century it is significant that the great poster had on it—a black man—I am a man and a brother. Not enough to base it on human rights, it is brotherhood, and it is a sense of brotherhood, under God as our Father which can alone do something about the appalling divide between the richer and the poorer nations of the world: now that's the global thing, and you have it in your title deeds at the very heart of what will be needed globally if our world is not to be destroyed by itself through its terrible divide between the richer and the poorer nations.

Now as you reflect on the life of your Society over the next few years, I hope and pray that you will be as anxious as you have been in the past, to balance the personal, simple, stripped down, way of serving through a poverty of spirit; the social, that is the embracing of actual poverty; and the global implications; all these seem to me to be necessary in the way of poverty as a way of response to the Gospel. So to try and draw my threads together: I hope you will find in the way of poverty things new and fresh; that the way of poverty will be the way of something disturbing to established positions; and the way of poverty will mean a readiness to take some huge risks, but in it you will find something joyful and in it you will find a way of love. But the personal, the social and the global, they must all somehow be given expression in the way you are called today to follow Saint Francis. I know I owe you so much and I know that I will owe you so much more in the future, and I feel awful in saying some of these things to you but I knew you would not want just smooth words.



## Images and Politics

*A transcript of part of an address by the Bishop Protector  
of the European Province and the following discussion*



WHEN we try to identify with people who are deprived in some way, we have to remember that wherever we are or whatever we do cannot be identified with them completely. We are bound in some sense to be different.

Even if you give up everything and go and work amongst them, even if you're a Mother Teresa, they can grow to love and admire you, but you remain different. It's part of the price that we pay in serving the poor. We have got to accept that they do not regard us, however much we may offer, as the same as themselves, because we have chosen to do it and they have done it through force of circumstances. That's a great difference. Because we are different, the people we're serving do expect that when we bring them into our homes it is going to be different in some sort of way. So don't get neurotic about images. This is the sort of thing which is absolutely obsessing the Church in England at the moment—bishops living in palaces and that sort of thing. It may not be right, it may give the wrong image, but once you try to change the image you change the job. What you've got to look for first is, does the job need changing, before you try to change the kind of environment in which you work. Don't be taken in by saying, 'We've got to give the right image'. You've got to do the right job and the right image will then emerge. It's only if you're doing the wrong job that the wrong image will emerge.

That's another thing I want to say—perhaps because I feel neurotic about it, it may come out wrong—but we've got to be political, and by that I don't mean we've got to be allied with a political party. But it's absolutely essential that the Church now speaks. We've gone on doing good work, hospital work really, helping those who are absolutely at the mercy of those in power. Now we've got to be prophetic to the power-holders and the decision-makers. I don't know whether this is really possible for communities as such. Certainly it's possible for individuals within it. But it is I believe one of the things that the Third Order ought to be absolutely addressing itself to. Perhaps I can say why this has disturbed me greatly. Quite recently in my own diocese, in the deanery synod which takes in the whole of Telford New Town and a large part of the rural area around (we have a very lively

rural dean, who is also the development officer for Telford New Town), one of the synod asked whether they could discuss Nuclear Disarmament. This was put on the agenda in a very negative way, that this synod is alarmed and concerned at the growth of nuclear arms and asks the Diocesan Synod to raise the matter at the General Synod, that nuclear disarmament should take place. As a result, half the members of the synod didn't go, and I had a large number of letters saying that this was not a subject which was appropriate for debate in a deanery synod. What we've got to do is to try and encourage people to take political issues seriously. Of course it's no use condemning nuclear armament unless you actually know the implications (a) of getting rid of it, and (b) of what would happen if there was a nuclear explosion. Our people have got to get themselves clued up. But at the moment there's enormous resistance against involvement.

I've taken up the gypsy cause. They're the real outcasts in our diocese. I was warned I couldn't have a private meeting—this was the police—because there would be a riot and they were afraid for my safety, if you can believe it possible from the farming community. I simply wanted to find places for them for the winter, where they could park their caravans and have wash-houses. I have got one of my clergy doing this who is greatly at risk. I cannot get the church people involved—they know they're going to be unpopular if they do. They all say, 'Bishop, we agree with you', but they are not going to do a blessed thing about it. The councils will not do anything because they know they will lose votes. Well, once you get into that area, you are bound to be political. You needn't be party-minded, I avoid parties like mad, but I think that in your thinking about the future and what might happen, that the way we're being pressured by events from outside is from the Lord; I think the Lord is pressuring us to be prophetic. You can be prophetic as a community as well as the individual working on the fringes of deprived areas and where there are real tensions, racial or otherwise. Justice is going to be the big debate in the church, and justice is political.

*Robert Hugh:* I think you said that if you leave the palace you change the job. I get the sense that this is critical. What one has constantly to ask is, have I reached the point where the nature of the place in fact defines the job? Perhaps one has to leave the place in order that the job can change if it has to. Then the place and the house can express the reality of the job and the ministry.

*Kale King:* Just as the friars and sisters need a place to get back in touch with the larger community, the same kind of thing is true for the Tertiary. There is a value in being able to slide into the brothers' or sisters' routine and get a glimpse of their community which is being extended to you too.

*Geoffrey:* I think this is enormously important. The more involved we get, the more into the situation we get, the more we need places where we can come to be renewed and refreshed and I think we need both things.

*Bishop:* They need to be bases, don't they, because the whole thing about S. Francis is that you travel light, so that you are never tied down to material things, never tied down by the house so that you must put all your energies into maintaining it. If the job is finished, leave it, and go on to the next thing. The large house does provide a certain stability.

*Anselm:* Francis did say they were never to leave the Portiuncula, as they were thrown out of one door they were to come in through the other, so there was an element of stability there.

*Bernard:* I think visitors are sometimes beguiled into thinking it is just a big service in chapel . . . The actual work of this friary, in the ordinary way, when we haven't got a conference (it's a complete holiday now) is very, very hard. Actually I found life in a small friary much more leisurely than I ever do here.

*Bishop:* Beguiled is a very good word; they are beguiled by their own image of what they expect. As far as I know whatever the image they have, when they go away from our friaries they are not disillusioned. I think they have caught something.

*Robert Goode:* We had several attempts at community life amongst the Third Order in the American Province; none of them has yet taken hold. Sooner or later someone is going to get serious enough for it to last a while.

*Bishop:* I think it's partly the strains and stresses of, say, including families. It's the sort of thing that could come, could grow, with the new experiments in communal living—Christian answer as opposed to the trendy one. I'd encourage it all I could.

*Geoffrey:* Lots of people are experimenting: we could too. We needn't think they've got to be permanent. They could be people who



want to come together and do a work. One of the dangers is that because a person is a Tertiary, they think that they can therefore live with other Tertiaries—that's a great fallacy. The important thing in community is to get the right people who can do it—live together. We do from time to time get a group who feel how wonderful it is, how right it is, but they're the wrong people. That's the key to community life, getting the right leadership and the right people together.

*Laraine Hinds:* Is it always your experience that a community has a leader? In Australia there seem to be little groups of people who because of their concerns have come together, that have a reason, that have a prayer life, a Christian witness of their own, but from my observation there doesn't seem to be a particular structure for leadership. They perhaps have a meeting and try to come to a consensus.

*Bishop:* In my experience there are two ways in which this happens. You get two or three who want to meet a particular need and in a sense there isn't an obvious leader, although you often find that where there isn't supposed to be one, there is a slightly stronger figure who does really move the decisions that are made. Then in the history of the church there may be one charismatic character (like Francis) who actually identifies a need or a particular thing which the church must do and actually goes for it and the thing takes off. This is the other way. There are many people who live together to make a Christian life with some sort of shape or form to it but I've never met one where there wasn't a slightly dominant figure.

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*Colin Wilfred:* There can be a conflict between going for the limited objective and the prophetic role. You only earn the right to be a prophet by being there a length of time.

*Bishop:* Unless you live in a situation you can't really prophesy—old Amos didn't stay in the country, he came straight to the city and stayed there. If you're a prophet the fact that you're there living out that life and winning the respect of people actually brings the whole thing out. Prophets live, they don't spend their time talking. Once they get the confidence of the people they become spokesmen, and they become political. They may then get identified with parties. They can't help it.

## Prayer : People : Causes

*A Group Report by Mary Johnson, Guardian of the  
Third Order in the European Province*



OUR Group report may prove a bit different. We were a strangely ill-assorted collection of people; in fact I think that we were the kind of group that a parish priest would not allow to meet more than about twice and would then give up in despair and turn the whole project into a hymn practice. No such escape was possible for us, so we spent the first two sessions eyeing one another in alarm and saying as little as we could.

At the third session we were, without warning, challenged in terms of one of the quotations from the material that had been prepared for the Conference: 'Reconciliation must start with the family. It is sought on a day-to-day basis in the ordinary events of daily life as we strive to respect and understand others' points of view without enforcing our own opinions, and also to understand their fears and prejudices'. We were reminded that a great deal of hard work had gone into the preparation of the Conference, that we represented some two thousand members of S.S.F., that all three Orders around the world were praying and that we could not let the opportunity pass because of our hang-ups and tensions.

I tell you this because in a way we actually enacted what we were talking about. We leant on the prayer of so many men and women in S.S.F. and among our friends. We ourselves prayed hard. The Holy Spirit gave us the response he demanded of us and we began from that point to grow in understanding, in open-ness and in courage. So in educational terms you could say that we began with school practice or with industrial experience and then came afterwards to the theory - and all this leads naturally to our thoughts on prayer.

*PRAYER* is the priority in our life and if it is not accorded that position then we are not functioning properly and are incapable of meeting the needs of other people. As William James said: 'Energy which would otherwise remain bound, is by prayer set free'. We were reminded that the morning after Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law a great crowd of sick people came to be helped but Jesus was not

available; he was away, praying. So, in the Solomon Islands, when prayer began to be threatened by the rush and bustle of life, the Brothers rose earlier to make their prayer time before the claims of others came upon them.

We believe that it might be helpful in both First and Third Orders if there were occasional opportunities for us to discuss among ourselves just *what* we do in our time of personal prayer and to do this as a way of helping people to learn to pray. In the Third Order, at all events in the European Province, we accept that much of our spiritual direction and indeed our expectation of the devotional life of novices is too traditional and academic. We need to have a good look at this sphere and to make sure that we begin where people are and let the Holy Spirit do the leading.

It is possible to adhere too closely to a structure of prayer so that if the structure were to fail for any reason there might be danger of the collapse of the prayer life: equally, it is possible to complete the letter of a Rule while evading any confrontation by the Spirit of God.

We recognised that a single sex community life is basically unnatural but can be transformed and made supernatural by grace; but if that is to happen a strong prayer life is vital.

Francis began by stripping himself, both literally and figuratively and we too aim to do this but the real stripping can be done only by God and a great part of the suffering involved is contained in our helplessness and in our inability to evade such pain. So we see the Stigmata as God's seal of acceptance of the sacrifice of Francis and as Francis' sharing in the ultimate poverty of Jesus Christ. Thus S.S.F. must die in order to grow: it is the communities and individuals that won't die that in the end don't do anything *but* die. It is only after God has initiated this stripping and suffering in us that we can really begin to minister to others.

This ministry to others leads to a consideration of the claim on us of *PERSONS*. We heard of Kale's parish with its contrasting groups of consumers and conservationists; of Tshiamala's Muslim football team, with its opportunity for dialogue with non-Christians; of Ruth's ministry to gay men at S. John's, San Francisco; of Tristram's work in an African leprosarium; of Anselm's responsibility for the Brothers, of his concern to match a Brother's gifts to the demands of any partic-



ular task and of the inevitable limiting of the vision of future possibilities by the pressure of day-to-day living.

There is a thing you can call 'tough love'. There may be people about whom one is tempted to say: 'Oh! they should never have joined' but that's not good enough. We have to learn to love them enough to confront them with their errors instead of just dismissing them as hopeless. Only love can speak the truth without malice: only love can receive the truth without injury.

Community living is a part of the Gospel life; the apostles are an example and so is the Early Church. Merely to live by Rule is not adequate; there must be humility, love and joy. If these are lacking, community life perishes. Community life in itself can be a service to others, because they can share in it in one way or another and to a greater or less extent.

Finally we thought about the claim of *CAUSES* on our time and energy. We realise that for a member of an Order to embrace a cause can threaten the stability of a house or group and that a cause may be a factor that creates dissension and even division. In the First Order of S.S.F. there is the dilemma that a certain numerical growth is needed if initiatives are to be taken and yet a failure to take initiatives may inhibit growth. Where a cause is espoused and a particular work undertaken it may well be that a judgment can be made only on the basis of 'You will know them by their fruits'.

It is the present moment which appears to afford us stability and we are often fearful of the future but in reality true security is only in listening to God and in obeying his Word.

As far as causes are concerned—and there are many that commend themselves to some among us—we would stress the responsibility of all Christians to keep themselves informed by studying such publications as the General Synod Reports and we believe that Franciscans should help local groups and congregations to understand the burning issues of our day. Are we, for instance, going to insist on trying at all costs to maintain our present high standard of living and the whole fabric of our Consumer Society?

We accept as a fact that we are no longer living in an age when we can function as respectable Christians but that we are entering an age

wherein we must proclaim the Gospel, stick out our necks and lose our respectability.

We end with a quotation from a book called *Coming Home* by Catharine de Hueck Doherty, for we find it relevant: 'The price we must pay, if we would have the Gospel come alive for others—is to live it ourselves. . . . It works, the Gospel is working! That miracle is happening; somebody is actually trying the Gospel'.

## S. Francis and Ourselves

*An address to the Conference by Sister Frances Howlett F.M.M.*



FIRST, I would like to say how happy I am to be with you. It is a privilege for me to be invited and my provincial superior was pleased to give me the permission to attend.

I would like to develop some thoughts on what I consider could be used to re-establish the equilibrium of our life-style today, especially in western society. The reflections I make are related to my own experience of Franciscan living on three continents as a member of the Institute of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

### *(a) Our place in the Church*

The life of Francis was a paradox, in that while there was no originality or uniqueness in his vision, he became the founder of one of the most controversial groups of his century, which together with the followers of Dominic, were in the forefront of ushering society into a new era. He and his brothers took no part in the controversies raging all over Europe, yet they were positive instruments in the forces which reshaped both Church and State. The thirteenth century was in many ways similar to our own. Amid technological advances and new discoveries people developed a restlessness with the old static feudal system. As capitalism and commercialism made their début, there began a movement of people to the urban centres. Corruption, power and prestige, both within and outside the Church began to be questioned and resisted, giving rise to the atmosphere we know so well, of fear and confusion on the one hand and freedom and searching on the other.

Francis based his life on the spirituality of the New Testament. That is Franciscanism. He had no tendency towards originality. His little group was one of several responding to the new challenges of the period. The difference between his life-style and theirs was that of non-controversy. While these groups clashed violently with the Church authorities, and were either drawn in and institutionalised, or forced out to become heretics, Francis moved on a different plane altogether. He was not anti-clerical nor was he pro-clerical. He saw the evils rampant in the Church structure and among the clergy. He looked deeper, to where all met in faith as members of the body of Christ, and it was to these, his brothers and sisters, regardless of rank, that he spoke of Christ. There was no criticism or blame in his method; he reminds the lustful priest of his dignity as a minister of the most Holy Body of Christ, kneeling and kissing those very hands which sinned and served in the same day. The cardinals are reminded of their responsibility as shepherds and servants of the Church with such clarity that they are overcome with shame and confusion at the contrast they present to the lowly Christ. Francis dialogued—he never judged. The call he had received to preach the good news to the poor so occupied all his thoughts and energies, that his purpose was not to be diverted nor dissipated in futile and worldly concern over what was, for the most part, only external and superficial to the core of christian life. Yet this call was only revealed to him a little at a time through a series of religious experiences from Spoleto to Alverna. Francis changed and altered his life according to the inspirations he received as to what Christ wanted him to do. The complacent, pleasure-loving and proud society of the thirteenth century found Francis' message so unconventional and disturbing, precisely because it had moved so far from Christ. God was buried under false images of power, rituals, formulas, systems, structures and laws. Francis ignored the lot and went quietly about preaching the Good News to the poor with the results that we all know about.

What meaning does this have for Franciscans today? Are we called to the same work of healing and preaching in a Church and world divided by hatred and dissension, yet both manifesting a spiritual hunger that transcends all material needs? Are we called to be non-controversial and non-threatening in a Church and world overflowing with both controversy and threat?

If the answer is in the affirmative, and this will be both individual and personal, as was Francis' answer, then our works, properties,



monies, life-style and whole manner of conforming to the norms of the society we live in will have to be scrutinised. This, in order to evaluate our living of the total commitment that is implied in a call to follow Francis who followed Christ. Yet we cannot go back to the thirteenth century, nor to any other century for answers. The answer lies in our transformation through the inspirations of the Holy Spirit to what Christ is asking each one to do today, 1981, in his body the Church. The answer lies in my transformation through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to what Christ is asking ME to do today, 1981, in his body the Church.

*(b) The re-discovery of our heritage*

Since Vatican II there has been a lot of research into the foundations of particular religious groups and mine, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, has been no exception. Out of this research came the somewhat surprising realisation that many forms of piety practised in the Church and religious orders went back no more than two or three hundred years, and were a response to a need arising from a set of circumstances now past. Our own Foundress, Helen de Chappotin, responded to those needs and from her life-long devotion to S. Francis adapted his understanding of the Incarnation and expressed it in such a life-style that hundreds of young women were drawn to follow. This in spite of the rigid structure of Church and State which encompassed her in the nineteenth century. In doing this she was acting in a perfectly authentic and Franciscan way which has added to and adapted Francis' vision according to the needs, circumstances and inspirations down the centuries. With the passage of time imperceptibly our life-style changed, accretions clung like limpets until at the chapter of 1966 we could be compared favourably with the Benedictines. A monastic observance had crept in that our Foundress had neither envisaged nor practised. To collect is human, but if we do not have the vision and energy to adapt to changing circumstances then like the dinosaur we shall die out. Out of religious groups that managed to get off the ground and exist for some time over the past 2,000 years only 30% remain. In other words 70% of religious orders have ceased to live. Most people want to live, so since 1966 we, as a group, have been chipping off our monastic accretions and adapting our life-style to the needs of the latter part of this century.

There has been some progress but for most groups in the Church the initial enthusiasm has died. Many are not sure that what is left is

worth keeping nor do they find the replacements all that substantial. Clarity as to what we are aiming for is lacking. It is now that each one needs to apply herself/himself to study the sources of the creation of their society; to pray and reflect on what is being asked personally as a christian and as a Franciscan in the Church today. The answer each one offers will be the life which will evolve for the future, and depending upon the fidelity of our collective answer to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as to how Christ wants us to witness today will come, or will not come, the future lifeblood in the form of solid vocations. Let us reflect that Francis captured his vision and response in few words fearing to impose on his brothers any lack of freedom in their response to God. Within an ideal God can reach the individual. I think this is a very important contribution for today. The average citizen of most nations is almost submerged in a multiplication of laws and regulations that hang round his neck like chains, directing his life from birth to death. He is helpless and pressurised within a system that is rapidly becoming inhuman and therefore unbearable. Gospel freedom is in radical opposition to this complex and anxiety-ridden life. Where the christian life is lived in its entirety, each member attentive to each other in relation to the whole, the need for rules evaporates as truth, trust and availability become priorities. It is within such an atmosphere that the Incarnation can again take place and reverence for the Body of the Lord and the mission of the people of God can grow and spread out to the ends of the earth. Where should such communities be found if not first among those committed by vow to live the evangelical life? Francis was not interested in what kind of work his brothers did; they had to provide for their own living through their work, but this was subservient to, and only a part of, their all-embracing priority of preaching the Good News to the poor and witnessing by their fraternity life the proof and concrete reality of what they were saying. This is a part of our heritage we are just realising, possibly as an inspiration in answer to a need of the times, when family relationships have reached a crisis and individuals feel lonely and alienated from their communities. Those in need look for a word, a healing, a prophecy, a message; often they look first to those who profess publicly that they follow Jesus, often they look in vain, for like Martha, I am busy about many things except the one thing necessary, time to give what has been given freely to me; healing, forgiveness and joy in the Lord. What are our priorities for the future in the light of our heritage?

*(c) What can poverty mean?*

This has been such a controversial and divisive subject in our history, not to mention the reality of the world today divided into rich and poor, that like the proverbial ostrich it is better not to look. This attitude stems from both fear and ignorance, which, if not faced and dealt with, is going to be a seriously debilitating factor in our efforts of renewal. The fear arises that if poverty is looked at too closely it might invite us to a risk we do not care to take. Ignorance is a smokescreen to prevent us finding out what poverty really means in our lives as christians. It is a tactic of the devil to keep us in a state of mediocrity, following Christ from a distance. The word itself is ambiguous and in many cultures today has a negative meaning. As in everything, we interpret the present by the past so it is essential to find out what poverty meant in the past to see what is relevant or irrelevant for today. In the ancient world the poor were those who worked and the rich were those who did not. In the time of Francis, with the emergence of a middle class, there arose a finer distinction. The poor were now those who worked as serfs or slaves. Others did liberal work, free people who had some time for leisure and the arts; then the rich were designated by rank, the nobility which included most of the hierarchy and the abbots of the great monasteries, together with the higher ranks of the military.

The meaning of poverty in the life of Jesus is not easy to discern, for in the four accounts of the Gospel there are ambiguities, four christologies, four views of Christ. An understanding of the part the Old Testament played in the formation of these accounts is essential, as is the knowledge of the traditions passed on and filtered through the writings of the Early Church. The scriptures are for all times. Therefore they give only guidelines, on the one hand positive, with certain goals and ideas, on the other hand negative: actions and ideas that are incompatible with life in the Kingdom. It is our task to interpret these guidelines for today, living as we are in the resurrection of Christ with the active help of the Spirit promised to us.

Christ's whole life was one of giving up and having less, both spiritually and materially. He took on human nature which was less than he was, his birth circumstances were less than adequate. For thirty years he belonged to the class of the poor, working for his living. In his public life he was an itinerant preacher living in open dependence on the Father. His group of followers, men and women, had a money-



box in common. They had wealthy friends and disreputable friends. Jesus was accused of being a drunkard and a glutton. His attitude to all and everything was one of complete freedom. His aim was to preach the Kingdom and he used material things as necessary. In his Passion he became less than a man, even to the agonising moments when he became less than his Father's son. And the purpose of all this taking less than he could have had, and was entitled to, was to do his Father's will and that 'we might become rich' (2 Cor. 2: 8). We cannot spiritualise poverty. Because we are human, what we eat, wear, feed our minds on, do with our time, is intimately connected with our spirit. It is a fact no human being can escape from if she/he wishes to live in reality. The Messianic fulfilment in Christ was closely bound with bodies. 'The blind see, the lame walk, lepers become clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the Good News is preached to the poor'. (Mat. 11: 15). The Good News in Old and New Testament context meant justice for the widow, the orphan and the alien. The Messiah would defend those unable to defend themselves. In the Early Church (Acts 4: 32—35), an ideal is proposed of the poor community taken from the contemporary Greek proverbs about friendship . . . sharing, caring, loving, helping, concern. This is one example of how the first Christians took something from their culture and transformed it. They asked: 'Where do you put your faith? In possessions or in Jesus?'. In the time of Francis money was just coming into general use. His anti-money attitude was probably an acute awareness of the evils this new possession would spawn and he opposed it totally. His followers however, tried to transform the use of it into an opportunity for men to help each other as Good News to the poor. Unfortunately the friars who wished to spiritualise Francis' ideal and follow him to the letter, probably not understanding his motives, went to excess. It is this strange and confusing mixture of ideas that has filtered down to Franciscans today without ever being explained or clarified. Today most Franciscans live fairly comfortable, middle-class lives, lacking for nothing materially, dependent on no-one, even holding positions of power and prestige. This happened to the early Franciscans too, as they went out to earn their living as part of the class of the poor; they were given gifts and because of their diligence and ability they soon rose to positions of authority; thus they had to re-think their life-style in order to be true to their calling of surrender to the Christ who had surrendered himself for them. It is important to realise that poverty did not come first with Francis. First he made his submission to Jesus,

then in a series of encounters with him, Francis emerged each time with a greater need to humble himself and live in a poor and lowly manner.

From this very brief and sketchy outline it can be seen that christian poverty has a very complex and ambiguous history. It has many implications that may or may not be relevant today. Nevertheless as Franciscans we are committed to live in gospel poverty and that means we cannot just be content to accept whatever comes our way in the particular culture we live in. After finding out what meaning poverty has for us today, there is a choice to be made and a life to be lived in the concrete expression of our vow. I think that some may be called to a more radical witness of poverty than others; within the Franciscan ideal there is room for (or should be room for) a rich variety of responses which requires a tolerance that comes from the respect due to each individual's unique relationship with his/her God. No matter the degrees possible there has always to be a life-style which expresses and witnesses to the guidelines laid down in the Gospel, shorn of monastic observances, open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and adapted to the needs of today. This requires change, courage and risk. Above all it requires a prayerful reflection and an attitude of listening.

#### *(d) Prayer as a tool*

I use this heading deliberately because twentieth century man understands its meaning instantly. Everything in our modern world is used as a means to an end, especially human beings, who are constantly being directed and even forced into patterns of life as a means to a commercial or political end. The dynamics of secular life can be transformed towards the christian end, which is the establishment of the Kingdom. One of these means, the primary means, is prayer, for unless there is communication between God and his creature, who can know what to do? Our committees, polls, meetings and questionnaires are so much useless activity if the results are not based on the individual's knowledge of what his Creator is calling him to be.

Many who came to Franciscan life as it was then designed before Vatican II, grew up amid a set of rules and observances that gave prayer an adequate place. With the removal of these structures many sisters and brothers became aware of a need for a deeper understanding of the place of prayer in their lives and for the necessity of guidance in this new and welcome freedom. What has become clear is that the

communal prayer, the almost exclusive right of religious since the Reformation, is no more than the common prayer of christians for the first fourteen centuries of the Church. Our Mass and Office is and was the minimum observance of a devout christian. It is the milieu, the platform from which one moves into private and personal prayer communicating directly with God. Realising this, it has been possible to assume a receptive listening for inspiration, which has manifested itself as a call to prayer; this has expressed itself in many forms such as charismatic groups, houses of prayer and a renewed interest in directed retreats and spiritual direction. All this is a sign of a return to New Testament spirituality. Christ attended services in the temple and synagogues yet how often he withdrew to solitary places for prayer. The Early Church broke Bread together, continually singing psalms and hymns to the Lord, yet Paul, the activator par excellence, withdrew three years into the desert, to be followed down the years by countless others.

It could be said that the years between 1960 and now have been a passiontide for the Church and especially for religious. This mystery while still continuing, heralds a new birth, which like all births will be painful. It is at this time more than ever before, that many religious are feeling the need to withdraw into solitude to reflect and listen and hear what the Holy Spirit is saying about their part in this new birth. In our chapter of 1973 it was suggested that each province should have a house of prayer to which sisters might be free to go for varying lengths of time. This has been implemented in very few provinces and surely the reason for this is, not that there is no need, but that the whole concept is misunderstood. There are houses of prayer in many countries where it is encouraging and salutary to meet and share with other christians, but Francis' idea of the Franciscan hermitage as an integral part of Franciscan life is unique to his Order. This may at first appear to be a new idea but the establishment of several hermitages are recorded within the first few years, and a return to life in hermitages seems to have marked every reform within the Order down the centuries.

Thomas Merton writing about Franciscan Eremitism says: 'The spirit of solitary adoration, in the midst of nature and close to God, is closely related to the Franciscan concept of poverty, prayer and apostolate'.<sup>1</sup> Briefly, a hermitage is an unpretentious house in a solitary place. One or two religious are left quite free to immerse them-

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<sup>1</sup> *Contemplation in a World of Action* by Thomas Merton, page 260.



selves in complete solitude and prayer. Two or three others act as 'mothers'—Francis' name for them—looking after the house, receiving visitors, one maybe a wage earner, but with the primary focus on prayer. Simplicity and mutual support predominate. None of these positions is permanent. Those in solitude change with the 'mothers' or return to their communities according to the inspirations of the Spirit. It seems that such a hermitage would provide the means whereby prayer could be used as a tool for evaluating, listening and forming our future.<sup>2</sup> The sisters and brothers called to these periods of solitude would share their insights and inspirations with those who may be called to a different awareness through persons and events. Together this would produce a climate of opinion that would serve as a catalyst in our search for christian, religious and Franciscan community. Both those called and those who are not, will prayerfully discern the spirits which move them to positive or negative action on this aspect of our heritage, which could prove to be the most important tool we possess in our efforts to achieve renewal and reform amid the confusion of the end of this twentieth century.

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<sup>2</sup> See Religious Life in Hermitages. *The Writings of S. Francis of Assisi*, translated by Benen Fahy, O.F.M., page 72.

## Breakthrough to Peace

*By Penelope Eckersley*



IN the paper Brother Geoffrey read to us on the second day of the Conference he said: 'The signs are that we are drifting into another world war. The word drift we must attack. Drifting is not a Christian attitude'.

Thomas Merton in his book *Breakthrough to Peace* says

'History is ours to make; now above all we must recover our freedom, our moral autonomy, our capacity to control the forces that make for life and death in our society'. This is an issue which Christians have a duty to discuss and struggle with. As followers of Francis, whose one command to those who wanted to join him in the Third Order was that they should not bear arms, it is particularly vital. It is true that in about two generations the world had eroded these standards, as with so much of Francis' legacy. The reasons that prevailed were that times

had changed, feudalism was breaking down so that it was no longer the city states or powerful Dukedoms which demanded allegiance, but dynasties with national aspirations and the Church fighting not only the Infidel overseas, but keeping them from Europe and preserving the purity of the Faith. These arguments and many others contributed to the idea of a just war; arguments which have parallels today and are as difficult to unpack as they probably were then. But if we are to recover 'our moral autonomy'; if we are to be peace-makers, we must try and understand the issues and explore the alternatives in our present situation in which the nuclear arms race threatens to destroy the human race.

We need to do this at many levels. It is not just the politically minded, the academic or those who understand the weapons jargon—MVRs, SS2s, First-strike, etc.—who have something to contribute. As long ago as 1910 Norman Angel wrote in *The Great Illusion* that a victor does not win a modern war, therefore he thought, modern war would not happen because people were rational. Recent history illustrates that our rationality is not dominant. Not long before he died Lord Mountbatten tried to alert us to the futility of our present policies; he said 'The nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence only adds to our perils'. But we are moved by many irrational things—unquestioned thought patterns, old ways of understanding and interpreting what we perceive and communicating it, which persist but do not keep pace with the applied results of our rationality—our technological inventiveness. If we are to keep this unbridled technology from destroying us we must change our perceptions of our world, ourselves and the way we relate to each other. We need a greater awareness of all which goes into decision-making, beginning with personal relationships right through to 'great power' politics; the different perceptions of any situation which influence those in powerful positions and the psychology of power itself. At present our symbolic perception of the danger which faces us seems to have us in a grip from which we cannot move, we try not to think about it, we feel powerless. We need to change the symbols, which will begin to change the perceptions, which will change the psychology which will set us free.

Ordinary people can only begin at this end because we are not experts. While we are not capable of making the kind of symbolic gestures which Francis could make, cutting through the received ideas of his

age so that the Gospel took on new meaning and vitality for people, we can still work together, little by little, to understand the new demands the Gospel makes on us in this grip of a 'war system' which we have allowed to develop.

First of all it is important to realise that the very feelings we have when faced with the problem, (which you may already be experiencing as you read this) feelings that it is all beyond us, that it is a technical issue which we cannot influence, must be resisted. The nuclear arms race is only one strand in a complex of issues, albeit the most difficult to be knowledgeable about and the most potentially devastating. The other strands are poverty and inequality in the world: between north and south, between the powerful and the poor in every country, between dominant majorities and underprivileged minorities in many places. We discussed many of these issues in the group I was in during the Conference. An illustration of what I mean by 'the strands' came up in relation to the policies of the new administration in the U.S.A., where the poor are being deprived of practical aid such as free meals and medical treatment and the money saved goes to increased military involvement in El Salvador. The poor in one country penalised to suppress the poor in another. This may seem a simplistic example but in essence it is what happens.

What are your feelings now? That this is a predictable left-wing attitude? That I am suggesting you should be political? How do we avoid the political content of the Gospel? You see the strands are entwined in our own perceptions which we need to look at, and have always been indivisible. I am not a Marxist but I do see how easy it is for us to be pushed into opposing camps by the poverty of our ways of seeing things. In between is the neglected middle ground on which most of us puzzled people stand. We must keep our vision clear and claim it. It is where reconciliation takes place.

We must refuse to de-humanise whole blocks of people whether by race, colour, politics or nation, as 'enemies'. What is your perception of an 'enemy' anyway? Is there any person, or group of people, whom it would be impossible for you to forgive? We need to develop a politics of forgiveness (Colossians 3: 11). From this follows the need to challenge the idea that it is unavoidable realism to see the world in terms of armed camps. No two countries have a greater economic need to get out of the grip of the arms race than the U.S.S.R. and America. Perhaps it is up to Europe to be a genuine bridge, to open



up alternative defence policies, to explore the strength of the middle ground. It also follows that we should challenge much of the accepted justification, in economic terms, for the continuance of an increased defence budget which absorbs over five per cent of the G.N.P. in this country. Figures are available which show that 'the higher the military spending, the lower the growth in productivity' and 'that almost nothing creates fewer jobs per dollar than spending on new weapons systems'. (Mark Gerzon: *War/Peace and the economy*, Boston Globe.) It should also make us question the amount spent on armaments throughout the world—which includes the relatively high amount spent by many third world countries for the suppression of dissidents within their own borders—in relation to the needs of simple survival. The amount of money thus spent on arms every two weeks is enough to keep every man, woman and child in the world clothed, housed and fed for a year (Brandt Report).

Finally we should resist the approach, which is part of this philosophy of realism, that to create fear in others whom we fear, will make us safer. Is this true psychology of ourselves? Of groups who feel threatened? Why therefore of nations? The more jittery and tense the situation becomes the more likelihood of an irrational reaction. The devastating power which our technology has put at the disposal of an irrational button-pusher can make that one small movement the first in *the* war which no one wins.

How can we be the reconcilers, peace-makers in such a situation? The scenario seems all gloom and quite beyond us. We must resist the despondency as well as the drift because they are not consistent with the Gospel, which, as the Archbishop said at the Conference, makes extra-ordinary demands on us. Reconciling begins where we are. To be more aware of how we can change the ways we look at the injustices of the world and take appropriate action, we must be open to changing the ways we look at the problems nearer home, among our families, our communities and our own nation. Changed perceptions lead to alternative policies. Prayer is basic to a clearer vision; basic to how we commit ourselves to persons and causes. 'Energy, which otherwise would remain bound, is released by prayer'. We limit our growth when we limit our vision.

So in our group we prayed and tried to earth our far-ranging discussions. What follows was the result which we offered as a way forward and which was commended by the Conference.

### Reflection on Becoming an 'Instrument of Peace'

In our group a key word has been reconciliation. 'Where there is hatred let me sow love' challenges me to take seriously the radical absurdity of the Gospel precept 'Love your enemies'. So we wonder . . . suppose I were to commit myself to spend fifteen minutes each Friday, with the S. Francis Prayer as the focus, with the aim of becoming more available as an instrument of peace? How might I use that time?

On different occasions I might use one of the following approaches:

- (i) S. Francis used the greeting 'God give you Peace'. Does God give me peace in my heart? Is there some part of my life which most needs reconciliation and forgiveness by being acknowledged in my prayer? If so what first step can I take today?
- (ii) Is there a personal relationship in my life that stands unreconciled? Does it wait for my willingness—
 

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) to be forgiven by God</li> <li>(b) to forgive myself</li> <li>(c) to be forgiven by someone else</li> <li>(d) to forgive someone else</li> <li>(e) to be willing to be the one to take the first step</li> </ol>	}	<p>. . . and if so, what first step can I take today?</p>
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- (iii) Is there a relationship or situation close to me which is unreconciled for lack of a peace-maker? Does it wait for me to take the risk of getting caught in the middle? And if so, what first step can I take today?
- (iv) Are there any people of peace whose courageous stand on a vital issue I admire? Am I praying for them? Have I let them know they have my support? By a letter? A phone call? A gift? And if not, what first step can I take today?
- (v) Are there any who claim to be people of peace with whose stand on vital issues I strongly disagree? Am I praying for them? Have I let them know, in truth and love, my own concern in this issue? And if not, what first step can I take today?
- (vi) Are there whole categories of people by nation, colour, class, political stance, etc., towards whom I feel fear (out of ignorance?),

anger, resentment, or indignation? Am I praying for them, and myself? And if not, what first step can I take today?

- (vii) Is there someone representing me, my locality, or my country in the political process? Am I praying for them? How can I express my concerns? How can I become involved? What first step can I take today?

## Prophets, Priests, Politicians: Reconcilers

*A Group Report by Brother Bernard*



OURS was a very interesting group of people.

*Dorothy* came from S. Africa, is married to an Afrikaans journalist and is herself an illustrator of books, especially children's books, and the mother of several grown-up children; *Hugh* has recently retired from a senior post in the British Army; *Frances* is a Roman Catholic sister now in charge of a retreat house and deeply involved with spiritual direction. She previously served in Nigeria; *Elijah* was an Archdeacon in Zimbabwe (now the newly elected Bishop of what used to be called Matebeleland) who is vigorously involved in reconstructing the church in his war-torn country; his wife *Edna* was with him; *Gooch*, previously in the First Order in the U.S.A., now is the Chaplain-General of the Third Order there and deeply involved in pastoral and healing work at many levels. He had recently left his parish for his parents sake and was looking for his next work. From Miami came *Dee*, mother of a large family, full-time teacher, keeping open house, very involved in her congregation and the wider church; all these belonged to the Third Order and there were four of us from the First: *Elizabeth*, Mother of the Community of S. Francis; *Reginald* from New Zealand; *Alban* from Glasshampton (and with all his experience of Freeland) and myself. I often found myself amazed to be with such a diverse group of people; we had seven sessions of about an hour and a quarter together; there was always a lot going on and we were all in it. We took as our general theme the questions (printed on p. 158) about initiative and stability but didn't feel at all bound by them. From a far ranging discussion, here is an attempt at distillation: somehow we felt altered by the experience. It wasn't that we answered questions so much as that we came to experience the issues and what choices might have to be made.

Keeping the idea of *reconciliation* in our mind we soon found ourselves plunged into the situation of the Third Order in the U.S.A. and into Gooch's testimony that the Gospel really works. Tertiaries had taken widely different views on the ordination of women to the point where they almost couldn't take communion together. Again a leading tertiary seeing Gays as a persecuted minority had taken a campaign-



ing stance in their defence, thereby shocking and offending others. Gooch as Chaplain had to hold the opposite views within himself and work to help individuals to do the same and to keep the group together. He had found the work terribly costly, but marvellous because of the power of the Lord reconciling and healing in the midst of it all.

From Zimbabwe, Elijah spoke of the cost of being caught in the cross-fire between those fighting for a new order and those seeking to preserve the old. He gave the dramatic instance of a priest who refused to leave an isolated community deep in the bush, despite the dangers. One day he was taking porridge to some children and was cross-questioned by the Security Forces. They thought he was feeding the guerillas, treated him roughly and left him beaten up. He said only: 'I am not a guerilla; I am taking porridge to the children'. When he was let go, he was at once seized by the guerillas/freedom fighters. 'You are collaborating with the Security Forces' they said and gave him a hard time. He could only say 'I am a priest; I am here for God. Kill me if you will, but I must stand for God'. They let him go. Each day for three years he rang his church bell. Both sides knew he was praying. Some thought him mad; but they left him alone.

We saw in the story the role of the priest to stand amidst people in conflict and in the name of Christ bear the sorrows and afflictions of his people. Any Christian in this priestly role might find himself bearing the pains of both sides, together with Christ, the great High Priest. We were reminded of pictures of priests in the 1914 war blessing troops: German, Russian, English, French, almost seeming to send them out into battle in the name of the Lord. But where does the priest-Christ stand in and alongside the conflicts of men? Must Christians be neutral to fulfil their priestly role? we asked.

But then from S. Africa we were reminded that neutrality is rarely an option. Young white Christians have to face compulsory military service. Some few opted out on conscience grounds and might reluctantly be allowed non-combatant roles. But those who felt their corporate obligation too keenly to allow this option may find themselves doing distasteful work on the frontier of Angola, for instance, or laying minefields dangerous to civilians. The politicians show some signs of liberalising policies previously held with rigidity; certainly they felt the pressure of international disapproval of apartheid, expressed in sanctions and boycott in sport; they had a feeling of outrage at being misjudged and misunderstood by world opinion and by people outside the situation who didn't really understand and whose house at home was not in order anyway (take Ireland for instance). There were pleas to allow gradualism to work rather than pressing a doctrinaire, if apparently liberal, inter-racial ideology. 'Give us time to work out with our political leaders a constructive answer to a complex problem' was the cry.

### The Prophet

And this led us to discuss the place of the prophet, the one who says 'Thus saith the Lord'. We saw him as one who spoke from outside the situation—from the desert, for instance, where perception of God was sharpened by the single-mindedness of asceticism—one who 'spoke to men in the name of God to elicit response from men to God'. We were reminded of the ecstatic nature of the prophet, who almost

as God's fool spoke a word of God which cut like a knife through butter, whether he realised what he was saying or not. Elizabeth remembered a Chinese proverb:

He who knows not, and knows he knows not is a child: teach him.

He who knows not and doesn't know he knows not is a fool: shun him.

He who knows, and knows he knows is a wise man: heed him.

He who knows and knows not he knows is a prophet: follow him.

There is something absolute and self-authenticating about the prophet who speaks about ultimates rather than proximates. He may deeply disturb his hearers or exasperate them or anger them. They might reject or crucify him. But his words carry the authority of the ultimate of God. In obeying God, others, politicians for instance, may have to work out what the word means in the situation; it may not be the prophet's job.

We searched our experience for prophets like that and, apart from Father Francis S.S.F. telling tertiaries they should stand on their heads for God in Trafalgar Square, we weren't very successful, but we did recognise the uncompromising, boat-rocking nature of prophecy. It may be the false prophet who says 'peace, peace' and endlessly works at harmonising and reconciling; things had to be blown wide open, the true issues disclosed, before true peace could come.

But there were some prophets who not only knew the mind of the Lord, but also cared deeply for and studied closely the affairs of men. In our times, Max Warren with the Bible, *The Times* and *The Economist* came to mind. His incisive comments on human situations, so disclosed the issues and pointed towards solutions, that, though prophecy is usually defined more as 'forth-telling' than 'fore-telling', his words indicated likely directions and outcomes. We remembered that one criterion in the Old Testament for distinguishing a true from a false prophet was whether his words came true. We also recognised that a prophet, like Jeremiah, might have to be unpatriotic and unpopular because he knew that Jerusalem would fall and said so at a time when everyone was working to save it.

### Holding Things Together

We recognised them, within each of us and in our various situations, elements of the prophet, the priest and the politician; how to hold them together within ourselves is the question. We looked at the solution to the Zimbabwe war which Elijah said 'seemed to us like a miracle'. Christians there prayed and Christians all over the world prayed with them; international politicians of various views tried to help; the white government and the various tribal and political factions in the freedom fighters inter-acted with the British Government. Tentative agreement on the formula of 'one man/woman, one vote' was reached, the British Army policed the election and the hand-over of power. A leader who inspired people to build together a new country for all emerged, energy was released for reconstruction. (Incidentally, Elijah wouldn't be drawn on the controversial World Council of Churches programme to combat racialism grants which had scandalised many in Europe but which others claimed had ensured the credibility of the churches and international Christendom to the new regime. He only said 'where are those ready to offer us practical help today in our work of reconstructing schools, building hospitals, looking after the maimed, the refugees and the hungry?' Nor would he

say too much about the Marxist ingredient in Mugabe or the constant terror of communism used to keep white South Africans from facing the nationalist issue among the Black majority.) What emerged from all this was that Christians often could not be neutral; they had to make decisions in real life situations, but maybe there could be a quality, the quality of a reconciler, in their attitude whichever side they took. 'Love your enemies' remained a radical Gospel word.

### The Options

But first we looked at the options.

Some Christians try to wash their hands of the world. At the most extreme they saw themselves called out of the world, which they would then leave to the devil. Such an attitude tended in fact to prefer a rightist authoritarian government which left Christians in peace. The theological objections to this view were not hard to find. This is God's world, man is made in his image and likeness and when things went wrong God 'so loved the world that he gave his only Son'. Jesus worked to transform, heal, and put things right by forgiving, reconciling, giving men a new start. He bore the cost of it ultimately at Calvary. The resurrection inaugurates a new creation, a new kingdom being brought to birth by the Holy Spirit in a new people. The living out of this mystery is in the ordinary stuff of daily life. Even though this world is not ultimate, Christians have to be this-worldly; Christianity is the most materialistic of all religions. We looked at how Francis had worked out his Christian vocation. We saw him as deeply compassionate, practical, radically-prophetic in word and acted parable, cutting through divisions in society, by going, for instance, to the Sultan and hearing him say (in effect) 'if all Christians were like you we would be at peace'; passionately involved in contemplation, wrapt in God and prayer; solid with the Church despite its faults; begging the brothers to be least of all, but urging the tertiaries in the midst of life to be penitent witnesses. Francis took peace, love, joy, wherever he went, but he was capable too of great anger and passion.

Returning to our options, we had been warned both by Geoffrey and the Archbishop of opting out through words. Liberal Christians, priding themselves on seeing both sides of every question, can produce finely-balanced statements which lead nowhere. 'The bland leading the bland' were Archbishop Runcie's words. Someone said that Anglicans will willingly vote for change as long as nothing is altered by it. Another option of the same sort was to say nothing about a situation on your own doorstep (like inner-city violence, or the situation in Northern Ireland) where a word might cost something, while saying plenty about a situation elsewhere, in Russia say, or South Africa where a passion for justice could safely be let rip from afar. We became increasingly aware of the subtlety of hypocrisy.

Another option (which anxiety about the others might push us towards) is to come down firmly on one side or the other and develop increasing blindness and passion against all who hold another view. Blind partisanship might not only bring the security of belonging to a group, free now from indecision, but also gives the solidarity of having something to unite against. The national togetherness in Britain in the 1939 war is often nostalgically recalled though the fact that it was based on uniting against a common danger and 'the wicked German' is not so often remembered. We came to ask ourselves, is it possible for Christians who of necessity take



sides, somehow to have a different attitude from others? What does it mean to love your enemies? At once we saw that we must not characterise them as monsters. Somehow, if we had to hate the 'ism' that was evil, we must also love the individuals committed to it. A Christian pledged to a cause had somehow to be a reconciler within it: someone who said 'yes' to it, but also 'no' to some aspects of it; who refused to hate or falsify for propaganda reasons.

### Violence

This brought us on to questions of violence, of nuclear weapons and of how to make love not war. We recognised how deeply inimical to Gospel-living was violence. How could the Christian pull the trigger? Yet we recognised too the violence of those who oppressed the poor by using force to maintain a system of injustice. How would the powerful give up power unless they were forced to? And how could mad violence be contained, except by restraint? We saw too that the massive human resources spent on arms since 1945 had in most parts of the world, and certainly between the larger nations, contained the conflicts and made solutions or part-solutions possible without physical violence. Hugh pointed out the traditional role of the British Army, from its last days in India, through the Middle East disturbance in 1947, in Cyprus, and right on to N. Ireland today (a task for which it received little thanks), had been to stand between opposing forces to give them time to find a solution without violence. The violence had been directed against the peace-keepers in fact, but the holding of a situation might allow a better solution to emerge. The politicians had to work at that. Similarly without defensive weapons roughly commensurate in size, the great powers in the U.S.A., the Eastern bloc, Europe, China, might well have broken into open conflict in the last thirty-five years. What was different in kind, he asked, about nuclear weapons as compared with conventional ones? The saturation bombing of Germany had been more destructive of life and property than the A-bomb on Hiroshima. We had to do cool, dispassionate thinking rather than merely react emotionally to these things. We were quick to point out what the Brandt report says about the other uses the money spent on arms could be put to (for instance, the military expenditure of only half a day would suffice to finance the whole malaria eradication programme of the World Health Organisation, and less would be needed to conquer river-blindness, which is still the scourge of millions) and Hugh agreed that poverty was the greatest moral question of our time. We recognised too how dependent economically this country was on the sale of arms and how deeply disagreeable we found this. Some thought that the existence of arms itself led to their use and cited the violence in the U.S. where guns were so easily available, as evidence. We recognised again the situations of antagonism between nations and races, the different communities in our cities and all the potential for the upsurge of violence; we then moved to ourselves, our families, communities, groups. But before we did, we recognised a pragmatic, changing attitude to ethical issues throughout Christian history, as though it depended on the situation whether a particular ethical demand could be made by the church on society in the name of God. Slavery, for instance, was tolerated almost without comment when Christians were a tiny minority in the Roman empire; and Christian masters and slaves were exhorted to attitudes which would eventually overthrow slavery, even though for the time being Christians had to live in the institution. Eventually the time came for change. One example was the nineteenth century

struggle against slavery which Christians had gone along with, despite its barbaric injustice. Christians had changed in a different way about usury when capitalism had come into society. More recently they had changed, or were changing, on questions like birth control and homosexual relations. Might the time be now to change on war as a solution to violent conflicts of opinion? After all what was the credible moral defence of war, surely not the 'just' war theory? On this we came to no common mind. We noted with sadness the much used phrase 'the nuclear theologian', theologian really meaning here 'unpragmatic theoretician'.

### Christian Hope

Again from S. Africa we heard of a school burnt down three times and twice rebuilt. It had been burnt by those protesting against inadequate and discriminatory education. The result: no education at all in that area. Senseless violence in other parts of the world were also instanced; but how else we asked could a protest be made to bite? There was the passive violence of the hunger striker; there was the moral pressure of Ghandi and those he inspired. Were these too sophisticated for the passions of men? But we heard of positive work for peace too. 'The Women for Peace' in Ireland, so heroic; the Christians of all traditions praying together, year in and year out, and the work of such communities as Corymeela and Rostrevor. We heard of a courageous dominie in the Dutch Reformed Church who, at great cost and risk, had refused office within a system that kept black people in the 'mission' churches. We heard of a congregation in Miami working to bring together the Cuban refugees, the steady stream of Spanish speaking central Americans now numbering 100,000 in the city, the French-speaking Haitians arriving illegally, the black militants who use arson, rape and looting as their weapons and the 'cocaine cowboys' who ply their evil trade among it all. The service of children of all these cultures in schools, of adults in learning English, in finding housing, in basic survival needs like food, all these engage Christians in daunting tasks. Dee said her family had insisted she carry a small tear-gas dispenser on her key ring. We heard of the 218 sisters of Frances' congregation who had lived incognito in ordinary homes in China, through all the years and who now were re-emerging into thankful Christian witness. Christians so often give what seems a drop in an impossible ocean into these situations for the hope of something better to come. Someone asked Mother Teresa what she thought about creating bigger, perhaps Government, agencies to do the work she was doing. 'They can't love them' she said.

Sometimes Christians have a vision of how things ought to be; sometimes it is proximate, sometimes only ultimate. The vision can help you working against the odds. But sometimes there is no proximate vision and the Christian is overwhelmed by the sheer weight and apparent hopelessness of it all. It is then that he is thrown back on to the ultimacy of God. Christian certitude is not based on any finely calculated probabilities but on God's ultimate character. Because in the end he is love, and we gamble that love will ultimately triumph, there is a ground for hope beyond the present data; beyond our own incapacity to live it.

### Discernment

The discerning both of this ultimate and of our particular vocation and our particular choices in all the areas spoken of throw us back, we recognised, on the Holy Spirit; the fostering within ourselves by prayer and study of the mind of

Christ we saw as a prime objective and we recognised the need of each other for this task. Some witnessed to the value of their Third Order commitment in this. The Holy Spirit both bound us into fellowships and gave us the courage to stand alone. He enabled us to be both conformist and non-conformist: to go along with and to stand out against. On all the big issues and in all the big parties and systems Christians stood on both sides. We needed to discover within ourselves and within our families and groups, what it meant to 'love your enemies' and be 'instruments of peace'. We were fascinated to discover subsequently that another group had produced a meditation scheme to help in just that. (It is printed on p. 151.)

The last session of our group was largely about food and began with Gooch's experience of breakfast in Japan consisting (in contrast to his usual cup of coffee and a cigarette) of smoked potted fish, fried maggots on a lettuce leaf, a large bowl of rice and a huge mug of beer, followed by a grinning, excited chef bearing down with a special afterthought of an American plate of ham and eggs. Why we ended talking about food heaven only knows, but we had fed each other in our sessions from our different cultures and situations and we had daily joined at the One Table to eat the Bread of the One Christ, his new Creation and drunk of the Cup of the Age to Come.

## Some Questions for Group Discussion

*What is the Gospel for us now in relation to the balance between new initiatives and stability?*

1. S.S.F. has made new initiatives in new countries in the last thirty years. Brothers went to New Guinea, for instance,—'launching out into the deep'—when the sending Province felt it could ill afford them. The Gospel speaks of 'losing one's life to save it'. Do you think S.S.F. today is called upon to make foundations in new places? What criteria would you recommend when deciding to open a new house or work to close an existing house or work? What does the Gospel say about stability?

2. Many answers to the Nine Questions spoke of penitence. Have you found new ways to recognise and deal with old sins or to help others to do so? Do you see a responsibility to recognise sin in attitudes of groups and societies to each other and to God's creation?

3. In any group some members stress stability and others change. Do you think attitudes have more to do with age or temperament or with where a person's ultimate security lies? How can we work to keep groups healthy?

4. People and Governments often see the Church as a stable element in society and don't like it to be other. How does this square with a Christian's obedience to the challenge of the Gospel? In some parts of the world some Christians side with forces working to overthrow or change the existing order of society. How do you see Christian responsibility in your country today?



5. Do you think that attempts to alter norms about food, the use and distribution of wealth, the conserving of resources, the way we live in our S.S.F. houses or groups, distract us from the essentials of Gospel living? What changes of this kind in your house or family or group have you thought it right to make? Are there initiatives in these areas which you think S.S.F. members as a whole should be urged to follow?

6. How do you understand obedience when a member of a group wants to do something new which the rest of the group feels puts their stability at risk or damages too much what they believe the group should be doing? 'To do our own thing' might be either self-centred or obedience to the Holy Spirit. How do we tell the difference?

7. Do you think your membership of S.S.F. helps you in your inner journey more by giving you a sense of stability and security or by challenging and supporting you in taking new initiatives?

8. Are you expecting this Conference to point to new initiatives or rather to reinforce present values, strategies and norms in S.S.F.? What do you think your brothers and sisters at home are expecting from it? What ways of trying to meet their expectations do you suggest?

## A Gospel to Proclaim

### *The Minister General's Closing Address*



WHATEVER may be said about this Conference afterwards we have certainly not wasted time. Even the free time has been used up by most of us in meetings of one sort or another and I do congratulate you all on the whole-hearted vigour with which you have tackled the

Conference. You have wrestled with some of the difficult themes of the Gospel. For some a new meaning has been given to reconciliation and our Lord's command to love our enemies. In every one of the countries we come from there is the need for reconciliation and forgiveness, and that we must work at when we return home.

You have agonised over the whole issue of the use of nuclear weapons and the drift towards nuclear war. What is the compulsion of the Gospel in this situation? What is the Incarnate Christ saying to us in the midst of our world? You have not come up with easy answers because there are none. But you have been real, human and practical. You have

talked much of prayer, but prayer that is conceived as love in action and not as an escape. Suggestions have been made that we not only have to pray for peace but that we take positive steps to be peacemakers. Peace won't just happen, and prayer for peace means we are committed to work to bring peace by every means in our power.

I see this Conference as having been a great meeting of our Society at the level of the Gospel in which we have shown that though scattered in many countries all over the world we are yet one family and we share that family likeness, the spirit of Jesus and his servant Francis. Separated by thousands of miles, by different cultures and languages, by political and economic differences, we are still one family in Christ. This we have experienced this week in our worship and prayer together, in our group discussions, in our eating together and in our fun together, witness last night.

We can say with confidence, and I think with a new meaning that we are the Body of Christ, and we have a new vision of our membership in the Society of S. Francis. The suggestion has been made that this meeting together between First and Third Orders should also take place at Provincial and more local levels. This kind of meeting is important if we are to be a brotherhood in any real sense, and if we are to challenge each other with the Gospel.

As well as what has been said at the Conference it is important to see what has not been said. There are some issues which have not been raised or which have only been touched on in a somewhat superficial way. Maybe this is because at the moment they are too painful and we feel we will cause too much pain to each other. Maybe you will find this in your groups at home whether in the First or Third Order. But as we continue to grow in love and trust we must gently raise these controversial and painful issues, because only when we can talk to each other in this way will we be growing. It was surely the Holy Spirit which prompted Mary Johnson to say 'Only love can speak the truth without malice. Only love can receive the truth without injury'. My brothers and sisters this is where we have to get. Most of us are a long way from such a love, but in our community life and in our Third Order groups and fellowships this is what we must be moving towards.

I have been delighted at the whole-hearted purposefulness of you at this Conference. The Church has so often been timid, afraid to witness

boldly and to take sides on the important issues of today, too willing to try to please and to become popular. So often we have been apologetic about our faith, and it has been lacking in power as a result. The world passes us by because we have nothing to say that is worth anything. I hope we are leaving this Conference with a renewed conviction and experience that we have a Gospel to proclaim: that the Gospel truths have come alive in a new way. Let us proclaim this Gospel faithfully and with conviction for it is the way of universal salvation and may it be seen as transforming our whole lives.

It all has to start with ourselves and within our own group, whether our Friary or Convent, or our T.O. group or fellowship. These are to be places from which we go out, not snug little nests where we cower together for protection. Certainly we are to be committed to each other as a community, but that does not mean clinging so tightly together that we cannot let people out, not to do their own thing, but to serve the Lord. Sister Frances Howlett reminded us that Francis was not a monastic. Anselm Romb O.F.M. wrote 'S. Francis backed away from the earlier forms of religious community . . . Our saint wanted smaller, mobile groups, who were loosely attached to a base of operations'. Their home was any base of operations that was a haven of spiritual fellowship and physical refreshment—a springboard back into full engagement with the world. This can be a pattern for our Third Order as well as for our First Order Brothers and Sisters. As I see it this means that we can send a brother or a sister to assist with some work for a limited period for a year or so, rather like the Red Cross sends volunteers out for a limited time to cope with an emergency. We must be much more supple and flexible than we have been. There is a danger that as a community we are getting hardened arteries.

When this Conference officially closes with the Eucharist at midday that does not mean we sing a great Amen, Alleluia and give a sigh of relief that it is all over and we can return to normal. A momentum has been gathering over the last two years which has reached a peak with the Conference.

I am reminded of that passage in Ezekial 47: 1—5.

I think when we started a couple of years ago we were only paddling around up to our ankles. When we arrived for the Conference we had dared to go in up to our knees. I would like to think that now we are at least up to our waist. But when are we going to give ourselves and



plunge in allowing ourselves to be swept along by the great torrent of the Gospel? That is what we have to move to when we go home.

Our brothers and sisters are waiting at home for our return. Many of them have been asking for guidance, for material for future meetings, and so on. I believe we have set a pattern and from the material we will set out in *THE FRANCISCAN* there is enough to work at for many a year. But it is all a waste if it is just an intellectual exercise and does not issue in action. Love is something we do, rather than something we feel. That is why 'The Reflection on Becoming an Instrument of Peace' is so important for at each stage of the meditation there is the question, 'What first step can I take today?'. It is when we let action follow pious reflection that we shall change, and others will change, and our world will change. From so small a seed can a great tree grow. We need the faith and the conviction which will give us the courage to take the first step. If you have learnt this at this Conference and can teach your brethren this at home then this Conference will have achieved its purpose. We shall be living the Gospel Now. If you want a message from this Conference it should be 'And what first step can I take today?'.

I hope the material from this Conference will help us towards a new fervour in our preaching, our missions, our retreats. But I hope, too, that we will be reaching out to others who are also struggling with right living in today's world. We have made a tiny start but we can share what we have begun to see and understand with other, non-members of our Society.

One last word. Some of you have asked whether we should make a date for the next Conference of our three Orders. This means, I think, that you have found much inspiration and help from this present one. But I think it would not be right to arrange for another at this point. I believe it was the Lord who inspired me to call this Conference because we needed to hear what he was saying to us. When the time is right for us to gather again he will inspire someone to issue the call and if we hear and obey it will happen and blessings will come to us. Let us leave it like this.

Let us be humble and tread softly for we have been on holy ground and let us not lose that word that has been given to each one of us in our hearts. The next step is up to each one of us.

What first step will you take today?

# Books

## Pointers

### Saint Clare Leaflets. Numbers 1 to 6.

This new series of leaflets, published by the Community of S. Clare and in most cases written by members of the Community, are designed as helpful guides on the spiritual journey. I find them difficult to review together because each has individual style and a different approach to the life of prayer. I hope, however, that this will be their strength as the series grows because they are the fruit of experience and as each arises from a unique vocation so they will meet a need and find a response in people of different temperaments or at a point in their pilgrimage where some such approach opens new paths for them.

Numbers 1—*No Time to Pray* and 6—*A Life of Prayer*, would be excellent aids for people starting to pray. 'People who genuinely want to pray are probably doing so already'. They emphasize the naturalness of prayer and are pleasingly uncomplicated compared with much that used to be offered and much which is seized on as new and relevant today but is devoted to particular 'techniques' of prayer. 'Start from some ordinary thing in which we see God'. Prayer without words in a relaxed and reverent state of wonder can be taken into everything we do. By just getting on with it, instead of agitating about finding a time to pray, it gradually happens. Life becomes prayer rather than prayer having to be fitted into life, 'Zenning it' as the author calls this relaxed-getting-on-with-it approach. 'You are the music while the music lasts'. Anyone who has struggled with painting or music or writing and then found themselves taken over by the act of doing it, will respond to this creative approach to

prayer. Number 6, which was written by one of the Community at Stroud, N.S.W., includes some simple line drawings which could be used as visual aids to prayer. The message of both these pamphlets in their different ways is 'when we say "yes" to God, that's when prayer takes over in our lives'.

Number 3—*Praying As We Are*, is too slight to be included in the series without further expansion. The subject is important because so many people play a role in prayer comparable to the other roles they play in life. To write honestly about accepting ourselves 'as we are' in prayer and not letting any of this stand between us and God, something a little deeper must be said about feelings of worthlessness and futility, about genuine experiences of alienation from God and perhaps particularly about intellectual doubts which inhibit prayer and in which so many people look for help and understanding. It has some good things in it however, such as 'Honesty is our business and it is sufficient'.

Numbers 4 and 5—*What did Francis see?* and *The Truth of Vision*, are, in a sense, about 'ways of seeing' which arise from and lead into, a more fully realised prayerfulness. This is a 'seeing' as experiencing with an outer layer peeled off—perception without dross. 'Things they had been told, things they had learned, began to become things they knew'. Francis was a man who, having said 'yes' to God, lived at this level, always relating all creation back to Him, even 'the trivial and non-descript'. 'He could . . . praise God with two sticks and a rotten apple'. In other fields of knowledge 'perceived

facts put us under an obligation'. To the extent that any of us have shared this vision, so 'our inner experience puts us under an obligation' to God and His creation.

I have left leaflet Number 2—*A Sense of Direction*, to the last because it is different from the others in that it is primarily a plea for good spiritual directors. Gurus are eagerly sought by all kinds of people, among them Christians, but not often found within the Church. So I hope the second half of this pamphlet will be taken

seriously by many Christians who might humbly help each other along the way and more especially by those within the Church who might encourage and help to train them. For it is rightly true that 'the Church is caught up in the suffering and disorientation of contemporary society' in which the quest for meaning has a new urgency. If we know where we are going, we must find a way, in the broadest sense, of giving a spiritual direction to others. These pamphlets are good pointers.

PENELOPE ECKERSLEY.

## Walking With God

**True Prayer (An Introduction to Christian Spirituality).** By Kenneth Leech.

Sheldon Press, 1980, £3.95.

It does not come amiss for any of us to read yet another book on prayer and spirituality; and more particularly when it comes from the pen of one who has already acquitted himself with some distinction in this field. We all need constant encouragement in persevering on the way of prayer and this is a book for all stages and states, for repeated use as well as for straight reading.

Father Leech takes the themes of the Lord's Prayer and uses illustrations from all forms of spirituality, both within and outside the Christian tradition, moving with easy competence from the Early Fathers to Zen, or from 14th Century mysticism to contemporary sect. This is neither a history of spirituality nor an exercise in systematics, but he draws on every known method, aid or symbol. It has rather the feel of one who himself is on the 'journey inwards', who knows we 'can only pray because God gives us prayer'.

'Prayer' he says, 'is centred upon and operates within the redeemed humanity of the Word made flesh'—God, courteous and homely as Dame Julian has it, but also terrible in his

glory. We respond to the Holy Spirit while growing in self-knowledge and holiness; psychological and spiritual progress being closely related though essentially different. We press on through darkness and the obscurity of prayer, the daily Christian battle, sharing the Cross and giving ourselves to repentance and metanoia, in the paradox of aloneness and the social context, this-worldly and other-worldly concepts. We are concerned with union with God, the unifying and integrating of our own personality, and our corporate union, praying as the Church, within the sacramental and the charismatic, our object and our means the vital and social life of God himself.

Discipline, fidelity, future orientation, acceptance; we find all the ingredients in this book, with an occasional spice of humour—'Prayer and sleep are actually quite closely related' and we are reminded more than once that we are made for glory, for right glory at the end of the journey. As pilgrims we may well take a motto from S. Augustine 'Sing Alleluia and keep on walking'.

ELIZABETH C.S.F.

## Jewish-Christian Predicament

*The Night Sky of the Lord.* By Alan Ecclestone.

Darton, Longman and Todd, 232 pp., £4.50.

'This book is a personal reflection on living at this time . . . I have been, like millions more, shielded from the terrible evils of the world by the accident of being born and living in relatively peaceful, stable England. Nevertheless the suffering and the horrors that others have known and still face are part of the world in which I live'. So writes Alan Ecclestone as he reminds us of the horrors of Auschwitz and traces the problem back to events two thousand years ago. For me, his work has shed new light on Northern Ireland, Vietnam and Afghanistan—all go back to long-lasting and bitter feuds, but he does not specifically mention these because in a straightforward, convincing and interesting way, he needs to emphasise the Jewish/Christian predicament. Having read it to review it, I now want to re-read it—to absorb more and to use it in the way he intended—to stimulate prayer, dialogue and understanding between these two major faiths, which,

in spite of their differences, have vast common ground.

Recently in *THE FRANCISCAN*, Brother Anselm wrote: "'In Tanzania, I saw a portrait of a black Mary painted by a white man—and one of a white Mary, painted by a black man. Both were trying to tell us something. . . ." Mary and Jesus belonged, clearly and distinctively, to a very separate nation which was in the grip of a powerful religious racialism of its own—and which to this day evokes more hatred, prejudice and persecution than does any other. It is the scandal, and the strength, and the glory of our redemption, that it was brought to us by a Jew'. I read that shortly after I received *The Night Sky of the Lord*, and it struck me that people could do no better than to look into 'the scandal and the strength and the glory of our redemption' by using Alan Ecclestone's book.

PHYLLIS C.S.F.,  
Novice.

## Priest Counsellor

*This Day is Ours.* By Jacques Leclercq. Translated by Dinah Livingstone.

S.P.C.K., £3.95.

This book is best read (and it is well worth reading) as a series of meditations; indeed the author's exuberant gallicism makes it almost impossible to read 'straight through'. It is the compassionate and indignant reflections of a priest who spent thirteen years as a missionary in the South Cameroon forest ('my training had prepared me to give; I had not been trained to receive'.) and is now a 'priest counsellor' at Notre Dame, Paris. 'Something is changing,' he writes; 'most of the men and women,

believers and unbelievers, who come to the reception chapel in N-D, no longer come to consult about moral dilemmas . . . but to ask deeper questions about how to live . . . they no longer "submit" but "take themselves on". They are seeking a meaning to their lives on the deepest level, an answer to the question God asked Adam: "Where are you?"

. . . 'Man's vocation is to be a prophet . . . witness to a God who watches over the world with love . . .



He does not supervise, He watches in tenderness'. A few pages later, with wry and tender humour, he writes: 'Prophets are tiring. So is the Holy Ghost'.

His thoughts are deeply based in

Scripture, refreshing and stimulating.

Neither the translated title (originally 'Le jour de l'homme') nor the sentences in quotation marks on the cover bear much relevance to the text.

LAWRENCE CHRISTOPHER S.S.F.

## Integrity

**Bonhoeffer : True Patriot.** By Mary Bosanquet.

Mowbrays, 1978, 287 pp., £1.50.

This superb book was first published ten years ago under the title *The Life and Death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. It is now republished under this new title by Mowbrays in their Popular Christian Paperback series at a singularly unpopular price.

The moving story of Bonhoeffer's life is deftly told, firmly set in the context of his writings, without the one obscuring the other (why can't it be done with Teilhard de Chardin?).

Bonhoeffer was a great man from a sterling family, whose father burnt into the minds of all his children 'the positive sinfulness of ever using a "hollow phrase"'. Bonhoeffer's

struggle with his conscience over how far to oppose a corrupt and unjust state has continuing contemporary significance. For one who eschewed hollow phrases or empty gestures it was a painful confrontation. 'As early as 1928, when he first attempted to formulate some thoughts on Christian ethics for his congregation at Barcelona, he had reminded them that a man has not always the good fortune to be able to choose between a right course and a wrong one, often he is faced with a decision in which every possible course has an element of evil in it'. Where his honesty led him is the story of the book.

TERRY CYPRIAN S.S.F.

## The Way of Faith

**The Orthodox Way.** By Father Kallistos Ware. Mowbrays, £1.50.

'My purpose in this book', the author says in the prologue, 'is to offer a brief account of the fundamental teachings of the Orthodox Church, approaching the faith as a way of life and a way of prayer'. Father Ware's concern is to describe in positive terms the faith by which he as an Orthodox lives. The author tackles the chapters on God as: mystery, creator, Trinity, man, Spirit, prayer and as eternity in clear, very readable and practical terms and he illustrates his text with the really most beautiful quotations, mainly drawn from

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Orthodox saints, but also from a wide range of Western Spiritual writers.

With very few exceptions, I would think that the faith as it is approached and expressed in Father Ware's book is not exclusively the Orthodox way, but is the way of the Western catholic church also: I mention that because it would be a great pity if the field of readers was narrowed down because of the book's rather specialised title. I do recommend this book which is a very reasonably priced paperback.

BENEDICT S.S.F.

## Practical Theology

**Today's Catholic.** By *Edmund Flood O.S.B.* £2.75.

**Faith in Jesus Christ.** By *John Coventry S.J.* £1.50.

**Moral Decisions.** By *Gerard Hughes S.J.* £1.50.

Darton, Longman and Todd.

These three books are part of the Practical Theology Series under the general editorship of the above first two authors. As the foreword to the series states, they are an 'attempt to give a readable version of the best of modern scholarship and theology'.

The first is the introductory volume to the series and sets the general theme, of how in the light of the teachings of Vatican II Christians are to be renewed in their faith and life. It challenges the Church to 'think big', to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to welcome the summer, even if the winter of well-tried formulae in theology, ethics and liturgy proved a more secure season. Its basic premise is that after fifteen years since the Council concluded its sessions, English Catholicism has not been in the vanguard of implementing its decisions. The author gives us some areas of Christian faith and practise which need to be renewed, but they are taken up in greater depth by the other books in the series.

John Coventry in *Faith in Jesus Christ* reasserts unashamedly the Church's claim in the divinity of Christ. It is a very readable book of 54 pages, which seeks to allay the doubts and fears of those who might be confused by the recent publications which have questioned this fundamental doctrine of Christianity. In spite of its strong

conviction, the book displays an openness and charity and is in no way reactionary. It is an excellent book to put into the hands of those seeking to answer the question of Jesus 'Whom do you say that I am?'.

At one time moral questions for the man in the Catholic pew were easy, it was a case of doing what the Church taught, an obedience to authority. For the man in the Reformed pew, it was a case of being obedient to his conscience as guided by the biblical teaching. Neither way is satisfactory on its own. Gerard Hughes in *Moral Decisions* makes a plea for clear thinking—the need to use to the full our own intellectual and personal efforts in making moral decisions. He also calls for prayer—an openness to God, 'to give us confidence that our efforts to think about morality will not be ours alone, but the efforts of a pilgrim Church led by the Spirit of God'. There are no easy answers, and none will be found in the book as to how to behave in certain situations, but Gerard Hughes gives a framework to help in arriving at a decision.

This series of books, although intended for Roman Catholics in the post Vatican II era, well deserve to be read by all Christians seeking to be renewed in and by the same Spirit.

SIMEON S.S.F.

## Dilemma for Mission

**Gospel in Industrial Society.** By *Margaret Kane.* S.C.M. Press, £4.95.

While helping to run a girls' club in the basement of a church, in the Kings Cross area of London, Margaret Kane

felt there was 'a total separation between the Christian faith as it was understood by those who worshipped in the upstairs

church and life as it was experienced by the girls in the downstairs club'. She knew the Christian faith is about the offer of life, and that was what the girls wanted; but when they asked 'What is it all about?' she was unable to say anything that was meaningful to them. That was many years ago, but the question is very relevant today. It is by no means easy to say anything meaningful to those who have never had any connection with a church, particularly if they feel society has no use for them and life is giving them a raw deal. Margaret Kane writes of the girls in the club '... their whole environment was affecting the possibility of their humanity'. Their situation raised in her mind such questions as 'How is it possible for people in today's typical situations to believe God is involved in their lives? Is it possible for them to believe that in and through all that threatens their humanity, God is offering them the fulfilment of their humanity? In the end, is the Christian faith a possibility for any but the privileged few?' Margaret Kane does not claim to have found all the answers, but she is singularly fitted to write on this theme; she was Industrial

Advisor to Bishop Ian Ramsey and is now a theological consultant, working ecumenically for the churches in the North-East. She confesses her dependence on academic theologians, but shows how their insights need to be reworked if they are to be helpful to the majority of people. To some extent Margaret Kane is doing this; she has been involved with all sorts and conditions of people over a long period; she writes from this experience, and from reflecting with others on their experience of life and how it may be seen in the light of the Christian faith.

The book is divided into five sections: 'I believe—How can I believe?; This is our life; Tensions and Dreams; Signs of Hope; Why we must Speak about God'. She looks at the tension between the Christian faith and the realities of life as experienced by many who live in the North-East, and sees this tension as relating to the heart of the gospel.

This is a challenging and stimulating book, there is a great deal in it of importance to all who are involved in the mission of the Church.

DAVID STEPHEN S.S.F.

## Books Received

The Reviews Editor gratefully acknowledges receipt of the following publications:

*In Life Eternal*, by Margaret Stevens, Mowbray; *Thomas Merton on S. Bernard*, Mowbray; *Encountering the Depths*, by Mother Mary Clare, D.L.T.; *Holiness*, by Donald Nicholl, D.L.T.; *Sharing in One Bread*, by Michael Perry, S.P.C.K.; *One Foot in Eden*, by Sister Cyrilla C.S.M.V., S. Mary's Press; *God Alive*, by Graham Leonard, D.L.T.; *Catholic Renewal Eucharist (Music)*, by Leonard West, Catholic Renewal; *A Thousand Reasons for Living*, by Dom Helder Camara, D.L.T.; *Only One Way Up*, by Kristine Gibbs, D.L.T.; *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Translated by Norman Russell, Mowbray; *God or Christ?*, by Jean Milet, S.C.M. Press; *The Central Message of the New Testament*, by Joachim Jeremias, S.C.M. Press; *Free to Love: Poverty, Chastity, Obedience*, by Francis J. Maloney O.S.B., D.L.T.; *In Place of Work: The Sufficient Society*, by David Bleakley, S.C.M. Press; *Religion & Theology* 6, S.C.M. Press.







THE GOSPEL NOW

*Left:* Sisters and Tertiaries on their purposeful way to one of the meetings.

*Right:* Rogers Banda from Zambia (*in doorway*) and Archdeacon Elijah Masuko from Zimbabwe.



